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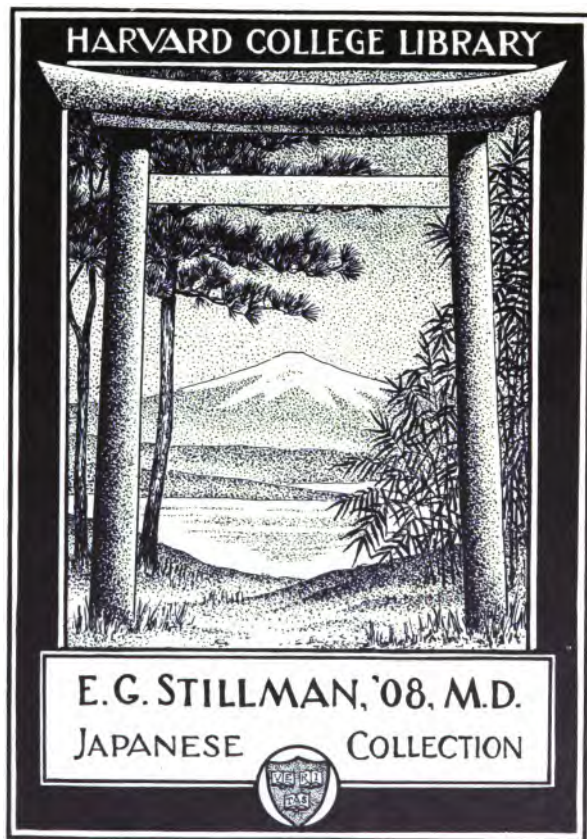
THE LOTUS LANTERN

MARY IMLAY TAYLOR
AND
MARTIN SABINE



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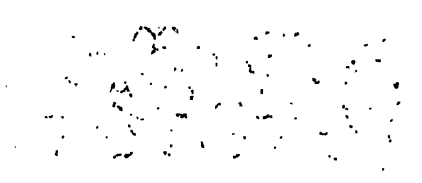
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THE LOTUS LANTERN



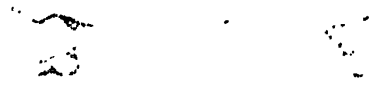
“Because she is innocent and without knowledge of the world,
she came here to me.”

FRONTISPIECE. See page 199.



THE LOTUS LANTERN

BY
MARY INLAY TAYLOR
AND
MARTIN SABINE



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
F. VAUX WILSON



BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN & COMPANY
1911



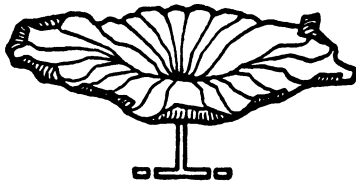
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THIS SIMPLE STORY, WHICH EMBODIES
A RECOLLECTION AND A DREAM, IS
INSCRIBED TO:

⊕ *Foomi San,*

THE LITTLE GIRL OF THE EMBASSY
GARDEN WHO GREW UP TO BE MAID OF
HONOR TO HER MAJESTY THE EMPRESS
OF JAPAN.

The authors wish to acknowledge their indebtedness to Mr. Osman Edwards for his translation of geisha songs, in "Japanese Plays and Playfellows," for the two verses used on page 151, and to Lafcadio Hearn for the rendering of the older original Japanese songs.

ILLUSTRATIONS

" Because she is innocent and without knowledge of the world, she came here to me " . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
She might well have risen from the sea-foam at her feet	<i>Page</i> 18
Face to face they stood a moment	" 126
" Child, child! " he cried, " how could you? How dared you? "	" 296

THE LOTUS LANTERN

I

THE blind amma was piping on his bunch of reeds, a thin, sweet, insistent note; it came up from the valley below the Embassy gardens, shrill as the piping of Pan.

The day had been breathless in Tokyo, but a light breeze came in now from the sea and stirred the folds of the British flag, hanging lazily on its staff at the far end of the lawns. A few lights shone in the Embassy buildings, and lights twinkled here and there in the Kōji-machi quarter, while across the white waters of the great moat the giant pines in the Imperial grounds gathered darkly about the palace of the Son of Heaven.

Above all, dominating the scene, crowning it with a mysterious glory, sanctifying it with an almost spiritual beauty, was the rosy, snow-capped cone of the sacred Fuji.

There was, at last, a refreshing moisture in the atmosphere, and the Embassy lawns were dewy with the rain-drops of a passing shower. The perfume of roses filled the air. The stir of life was arrested; the alluring spell of the East, poignant

in mystery and magic, was felt in the blue mists of the valley, in the weird light on the whitened waters of the moat, in the shrouding ranks of the Imperial pines, knee-deep in fragrant foliage, in the deep-throated notes of the bronze bell of the temple, in the distant twang of the koto.

Hallard felt it. He stood looking down into the valley, and from the unseen street came the recurring murmur of Oriental life. Before him the beautiful, sacred mountain grew whiter against the magnificent blue of the Japanese sky. The temple bell hushed its tolling; the music of koto and samisen as suddenly ceased. It grew still, as if the heart of the city had suspended its pulsations, as if the islands and the sea no longer breathed. Then, abruptly, the blind amma piped again upon his reeds.

Lieutenant John Hallard, the newly arrived military attaché of the British Embassy at Tokyo, was not a dreamer of dreams, he was even without superstition; yet he stood quite still, listening to the thin piping of the blind amma, to the low musical cry that followed it:

“Amma-kamishimo-go-hyakmon!”

For only the blind are permitted to massage away all human ills, — and for so little!

“Amma-kamishimo-go-hyakmon!”

The Ambassador came slowly across the grounds. It happened that, before they were both transferred to the Diplomatic Corps, he had

been Jack's colonel, Overton of the Light Horse; "Old Mulehead," they used to call him in the Punjab, but that was ten years ago. He was a short, stout man now, with a thick neck and the eye of a vicious mule, but he had done good service and secured his reward. Most of us look for that in the Kingdom of Heaven, but there were some who said that Colonel Overton did wisely to get his beforehand! He was dressed in white flannels and wore a wide leather belt, which was intended to help him see his knees; yet he had once been a beautiful figure on a polo pony!

"I want a word with you, Hallard," he began, as he approached. "I've got an audience with the Emperor to-morrow, and — what the devil?"

This last was addressed to Unke, the head boy at the Embassy, who was bowing and making mysterious signs in the edge of the shrubbery. The colonel looked around quickly and saw a strange Japanese behind Unke. The man was only a kuruma runner and wore the short blue jacket and close-fitted blue drawers and straw sandals of his class, with the big white mushroom of straw on his head. His squat, blue figure rose from the clustered azaleas with a singularly gnomelike effect. The pale oval of his face, the glittering, oblique eyes, the patient, Oriental smile, had been slightly shaded under the brim of the huge hat, which he removed as he caught the Ambassador's eye. Overton viewed him a moment

in gloomy silence, but with a vicious look under his bent brows. Then he said something strong and simple under his breath.

"Just wait a bit, Hallard," he added aloud; "I've got to see this fellow on business."

"I'm entirely at your service, sir," Hallard replied, not without amusement. He knew when Colonel Overton was embarrassed, but why his Chief should be embarrassed by a Japanese coolie he could not conjecture.

That the Ambassador was both angry and embarrassed was patent, as he moved away in the direction of the old water tower, followed by the kurumaya. It was then that Hallard discovered that the man was curiously deformed; he had narrowly escaped being hunchbacked and carried his head thrust forward like a turtle's, yet he had the appearance of great physical strength. There was something malignant about his aspect, something that suggested the evil gnome of an ancient fairy-book, yet his smile was caressing, his manner humble; he bowed almost to the ground before the British Koshi Sama, as the natives called the Chief.

Hallard looked after the strange pair with idle curiosity; something in the little scene held his attention. He knew the Ambassador well, and he could not be blind to the patent uneasiness in the colonel's attitude, his air of restrained impatience, his forced politeness to the kurumaya!

The deformed runner must have cast a spell, as mysterious as it was evidently potent, upon the British Koshi Sama. Overton stood listening, flushed, frowning, yet restrained; and the Japanese whispered and gesticulated. Once it seemed to the observer that he threatened!

"It's jolly queer!" Hallard thought, and lit his cigarette. "I've seen that old, blue-legged runner before somewhere. It was here! Last week, too, and the week before, dodging around the compound; and I'm hanged if Overton isn't in a blue funk!"

It was, indeed, so plain that Overton was in trouble, that the younger man turned his back again and looked out at the sacred mountain. The early Eastern night fell fast; again live things hushed, and he heard the runner speaking sharply, persistently, to the Ambassador. Hallard did not like it; unconsciously he resented the affront to the person of the Chief, to the majesty of the British representative in Japan. What business had this coolie here, inside the compound? What mystery was coming to a head in the Embassy garden? Had the spell of the East corrupted the power of the British Koshi Sama? Why did Overton dicker with a kurumaya?

Hallard frowned and flung away his cigarette, the spark descending into the hazy valley. He watched it grow infinitely small and yet unextinguished; it sank slowly, a mocking prick of

fire. Again the thin piping upon the reeds; one long, flute-like note, then two short ones. The spell of the East had surely laid hold upon him. And it was then, for the first time, that he heard, far, far off, the tinkling, mocking sound of the geisha's little drum.

The night darkened quickly, the valley slipped away in its blue mists, the lights twinkled behind many a latticed window, the Imperial pines were black. Only the upper sky remained slightly flushed with the afterglow, and against it the white cone of Fuji was splendidly revealed.

Hallard roused himself; a curious, dreamy sensation had held him in its thrall. He turned in time to see the bent figure of the Japanese runner slipping away into the foliated distance.

The Ambassador was coming across the lawn again, his large, white figure apparently occupying more space than usual, and he was mopping his brow. Evidently the evening breeze had failed to cool his fevered blood.

"Curious, how well these fellows manage English," he remarked, with forced lightness of tone; "that brute can speak it nearly as well as I do."

"They're very clever," Hallard replied, refusing the colonel's proffered cigar, "an astonishing race."

"Damn 'em!" said the Ambassador, with feeling, striking a light.

As he spoke, there was a succession of shrill little screams from the shrubbery, followed by an altercation in Japanese. Hallard went over and looked through the screen of foliage toward the servants' quarters. He came back smiling.

"Your Excellency's visitor came suddenly on the cook's children and frightened them out of their wits. Unke says they thought he was the Thunder Animal."

The colonel laughed bitterly. "Uncommonly good name for him; I wish he'd go to thunder!" As he spoke, he began to walk to and fro in the path, his hands behind him. "I've had damned bad news," he remarked at last.

"Not by the runner, I trust," said Hallard politely.

The Ambassador stopped and stared at him. In the dusk, he could not see a feature of the young man's face, but he had recognized the dry tone of the voice. "No," he said sharply, "not by the runner. By the way, we will cut out the runner as a subject of conversation. My news was from London. That investment of mine in Wall Street has gone to splinters, — these confounded Yankee schemes don't hold water, — and, of course, Barnes and Smith are on the point of foreclosing on that Staffordshire property. I'm uncommonly sorry, Hallard, but I'll have to ask you to extend that note."

There was a feverish tone in the Ambassador's

voice. Hallard felt sorry for a man of his years and position forced to ask favors of his subordinate.

"That's all right, sir; I'm not in need of the money. We'll let it go until matters are easier."

Overton drew a deep sigh of relief. "Thank you; you're a lucky dog to be so well off," he said briefly, forced into an attitude of propitiation foreign to his bullying nature and therefore especially annoying to the flesh. "By the way, Maud will be here by the nineteenth."

"So she wrote me," Hallard said quietly.

The Ambassador gave him a keen glance. Their promenade had brought them nearer the bay window of the Embassy dining-room, and the light from within fell on the young officer's face. It was as unruffled as a summer sea. Its placidity annoyed the colonel.

"If I'm detained here, you can run down to Nagasaki and bring her up. She'll have the maid and sixteen boxes, I suppose."

Hallard smiled. "Only sixteen boxes? Of course I'll be delighted to go to Nagasaki to meet her."

The Ambassador frowned. Hallard was engaged to be married to his daughter, but he spoke of her advent in Japan in the same tone in which he made observations on muffins and tea; and Hallard was rich, provokingly rich. As a lover, the colonel

thought him as interesting as a Japanese idol. If he continued like this, would Maud — Maud's father shut his mouth with a snap; the marriage was arranged, and it would go hard with him if he did not see it through. Hallard was a queer fish, but he was securely hooked, and he would not dare to slight the Ambassador's daughter, even granting that certain transactions rather stared at the Ambassador just now. These thoughts were unpleasant; so were the mosquitoes. He slapped at them viciously, and then became aware that Hallard was speaking again.

"I'd like a day or so leave, sir," he said; "I want to go down the coast below Kamakura to see the Bommatsuri; it occurs next week, you know."

"What the devil is the Bommatsuri?" If the Ambassador knew, he was in no mood for Japanese customs and festivals.

"The Festival of the Dead, sir; some call it the Festival of Lanterns. You know they decorate all the graves with white lanterns, and they send little, lighted ships out on the night of the fifteenth to take back the visiting souls of the departed to their paradise. I'm told the last night of the Bon is worth seeing, and I thought you could spare me?"

"Of course I can spare you," Overton replied sullenly; "but it's all damned nonsense! I believe they have a market and buy food to feed

ghosts. I'd like to make ghosts of some of 'em!" he added, under his breath.

"Yes, the Bon-ichi, the market for the dead; I want to see that, too." Hallard smiled in the darkness now at the disgruntled air of his Chief. "So, if you can spare me, sir —"

The Ambassador knocked the ashes from his cigar with a vicious twitch. "No trouble about sparing you, young man," he said bluntly; "De Freece is coming back from the hills to-morrow with some game, I hope, and with as little sense as usual, I suppose. Go, by all means, my boy, but be damned careful to let these little, squint-eyed devils alone. Help 'em pack their grips for the River Styx, or whatever they call it, but don't you meddle with 'em in this life, that's my advice!"

Hallard laughed softly. "Your Excellency has had some unpleasant experiences, I fear, yet, to me, there is a charm about this country, a subtle spell of Eastern life and superstition. To be sure I've only been here a month."

"I wish I'd only been here a day," said his Chief gloomily; "I was here twenty years ago and I knew the confounded place by heart, then. I don't know what particular Japanese devil possessed me to return!"

Hallard glanced at him curiously; he was suddenly aware of that visit twenty years, or was it twenty-one years, before? Did the kurumaya

belong to that period? "Then you don't like your high office here, sir?" he remarked courteously.

Overton started. He looked up, and through the gloom tried to see the young man's eyes. "Of course I like my place," he retorted testily. "And the country? Oh, it has its points; I'll admit that. They don't riot over foreigners in the streets now, as they did in poor Sir Harry Parkes' time. But — oh, damn it all! The mosquitoes are eating me; come in and have a game of billiards."

As he spoke, he started across the lawn; that he was flushed and angry and uneasy was obvious to the most undiscerning. Hallard paused an instant, thinking, and smiled a little in the darkness. To be sure! The Ambassador had been in Japan about twenty years before; vaguely he recalled the fact of that visit. Overton had been sent on a special mission, as a subordinate then, not as the Chief. More than that Hallard did not know. But out of the past there might have risen the blue-clad, crooked figure of the kurumaya, with his bobbing, close-shaven head and his white, mushroom hat. Strange ghosts arise out of the past, even with the yellow faces of Japanese coolies. Hallard smiled again. Poor old Overton was, doubtless, enjoying some reminiscences. The young man even laughed lightly to himself; his future father-in-law was not alto-

gether an agreeable person, but he was sometimes entertaining.

Nothing, however, should spoil the pleasure of these early days in Nippon. Again he felt the spell of the night. He would let the Ambassador reach the house before he turned to follow him. He stood still, his eyes resting on the darkened valley below them. The night was deep and sweetly perfumed; like a ghost the white Fuji San rose against the sky. The fragrant stillness folded softly about him; a light breeze caressed him.

Once more he heard a teasing, provoking, alluring sound in the distance, — the geisha's little drum.

II

HALLARD got his leave of absence, but it was delayed by official business and granted grudgingly. Overton was never gracious, and for the last few days he had been in what Arthur de Freece called "a devil of a tantrum." But at last Hallard was permitted to go to Yokohama, where he tried to get news of his friend, Thompson Dean, chaplain on board H. M. S. *Diana*. Dean had gone inland on a fishing trip, and so Hallard went on to Kamakura, amid its desolate sand-dunes and its rice-fields, and from there, late in the evening, found his way to a little village beyond the more fashionable resort at Horiuchi. He passed the summer villas of wealthy residents of Tokyo and Yokohama, the palace of the Crown Prince, and the seaside homes of one or two of the Ambassadors.

The scene was full of life and color; here was a jinrikisha with two coolies, a ni-nim-biki, there a fashionable European carriage with a bettō running before it. There, too, before some merchant's open booth, fluttered the little blue banners with white ideographs. Hallard avoided the gay groups of summer idlers, and pursued his

way down the wind-blown beach to a small native settlement, discovered some time before by Dean. That indefatigable fisherman had advised him to go there to observe the Japanese peasant life in all its simplicity, and the young attaché felt a pinch of annoyance that his adviser had been beguiled into a fishing trip just at the auspicious moment of the Bommatsuri. But one could not be angry long with Dean, and Hallard laughed a little to himself at the thought of his stout blond comrade, burned to a lively red in pursuit of the elusive tai.

Meanwhile, the scene before him opened with promise. There were no foreign barbarians here, only the half-naked fishermen, singing the toil-song, while they drew in their nets to dry, for no boat is launched on the night of the Bon, save only the shōryōbune.

Hallard turned the wooded spur of the hill, their weird song in his ears, and saw the flat roofs and, here and there, a little puff of smoke. It seemed as if a sudden gust had dropped a handful of dead brown leaves on the yellow sands, and a smouldering fire sent up those blue curls of vapor.

The little, worn, sea-seamed hamlet nestled among its coast firs, the hama-matsu, on a tiny bay within the bay. The single street, fringed sparsely with the weather-beaten huts, was brown and straggling; only, here and there, the roof-

flower bloomed abundantly, or an open shoji showed the charcoal fire in the hibachi. The still bay lay under a bank of mist, from which the distant Fuji rose, white as the soul of a new-born child. Hallard went down on the beach and waited. If the mist lifted, the sea would be calm. Already the torches burned weirdly on the crests of sand-dunes, where, on the first night, had been kindled the hundred and eight fires of the Bon.

The night deepened, the stars came out and, abruptly, the mist lifted, rolled back and curled, feather after feather, around Fuji's knees. Then, all about him, mysteriously and silently, little lights flashed out, trembling through the dusk like fallen stars, fantastic in shape, beautiful in radiance; a multitude of variegated lanterns, marvelous lanterns, blinking everywhere, brilliant and flaunting, as if a garden of flowers had bloomed in fire; opening gorgeous petals, like blossoms in the night, to show a heart of flame. And with them, pale, luminous, beautiful, the white lanterns of the Bon. All about there rose, as suddenly, the soft murmur of voices, where the gentle mourners knelt or stood together in groups. Some were already launching the little lantern-lighted boats, wading knee-deep into the surf to start them beyond the danger even of the diminutive waves of a placid night.

Hallard sat up in the sands and watched them.

How curious these people were, how weird their conceptions of life and death. As yet he could not understand; he knew little of Buddhism, less still of Nippon, but even their superstitions had a delicate charm. They moved to and fro, pausing before the lights, their flowered robes glistening in the lantern flames. Some of them sang softly or chanted to themselves, as they lighted the spirit lanterns and hung them on their little boats. It was unique, it was fascinating, it was like a dream.

Then he became aware of one figure that had separated itself from the rest, and stood out before him, arresting his thought. A beautiful lantern, in the shape of a snowy lotus flower, shining with the flame at its heart like the fire of an opal, was at her feet. Its soft radiance illuminated her, made a nimbus about her like the saint in some mullioned window; it lifted her out of the wraiths and mist feathers, and embodied her in perfection. She knelt close to the crinkling edge of the midnight sea, a little Japanese girl clearly outlined, etched with a single stroke of beauty against the fantastic glow of the bondorō, — the lanterns for the dead. Her fine little hands were folded against her breast, her long eyes glowed with the concentration of her spirit, her lips were slightly parted with a smile, tender and sad as love itself; evidently her heart was following the little Ship of the Soul.

She and a young Japanese had launched it together. Hallard had seen them wading out of the surf, but now she was alone, and the little boat rode gallantly on the gentle waves. The light of its tiny lantern flickered low at first, low as the sorrow in their young hearts; then it shot up, white as the flame of perpetual hope; now it burned steadfastly, calmly, warmly, as their memory of their dead. Something in her attitude, her flowerlike face, was peculiarly touching, and Hallard watched her. The others moved about him, to and fro, like gentle wraiths, but she remained quiet, the lotus lantern at her knees, her eyes fixed on the twinkling light at sea.

The air blew in keen now from Odawara Bay, with the savor of seaweed, with the heavy sweetness of incense; the yellow sand shimmered in the circles of light, while the dark waves were filled with scattered sparks — hundreds of little lights going down to the sea in ships. They wavered and danced and beckoned; they flashed in the violet darkness like fireflies; they lured with the magic of the unknown; they were gone and they came again, over the crest of the sea, — the Lanterns of the Shōryōbune, the Ships of Souls.

Miniature boats of close-woven barley straw, freighted with choice food, lit by tiny lanterns, with the *kaimyō*, or soul name, of the dead on their white sails, with the mystic *manji* on their

little paper banners, launched on the Tide of Returning Ghosts — Hotoke-umi.

For it was midnight, the sixteenth day of the seventh month, the end of the Bon, the Festival of the Dead in Japan.

The mystery and the fascination of it laid its spell upon Hallard, who continued to observe the little mourner of the lotus lantern. In its aureole of white light, the young girl watched the ships of souls. The silvery gray of her kimono and the mauve tints of her obi blended with the sea mists, and there was something subtle in the charm and mystery of her slender figure; she might well have risen from the sea-foam at her feet. She drooped lower, resting her rosy palms on the sands, and watched her own little boat, with its tiny paper sail and its gleaming little lantern; and Hallard watched her.

The point of light glimmered and wavered, farther and farther away, receding ever. She watched it go, and apparently her grief was poignant. Farther away there were other lights, but they never confused her, that one she could see forever; it was small and far, but it was infinitely beloved. Around her arose the soft murmur of gentle voices, the sighs of farewell to the dear ghosts returning from their three days' visit to the living, permitted of the gods. She rose and waved her hand toward the shōryō-bune.



She might well have risen from the sea-foam at her feet. *Page 18.*

"Sayonara!" she whispered; "Sayonara, Haha San!"

Her lips quivered, no longer smiling; her small, exquisite face looked infinitely childish and pure. Thrice more she waved her hand. The little light went out and came again, in the twinkling of an eye. The shōryōbune were all far, far off now, going down to the edge of the world, like stars in the violet mists, a fleet of fairy lights.

The young girl turned.

"Masamitsu," she said, "is it thou?"

Then she started back a little in sheer surprise, for she found herself beside Hallard. He tried to reply, but his Japanese was a fearful jargon. Her confusion was only for the moment; she had seen this particular stranger before, though he knew it not. He was quite widely known in Kamakura and its neighborhood as "the foreign barbarian with the yellow head, who desires to shoot things." Of this he was not aware, however. It is well, sometimes, that we do not see ourselves as others see us.

She looked down, as a Japanese maiden should, and listened sweetly, her little hands clasped under her long gray sleeves; then a fluttering smile passed over the oval of her face, and a glimmer of mischief shone in the long eyes, which still looked meekly down.

"If your Superiority will speak English," she

said demurely, with gentle politeness, "I do miserably understand lig — lig you do Japanese!"

"I'm jolly glad to hear it," he replied, with immense relief, "only I hope you understand it better. I never get the sound of your language; I wonder if you know what I said just now? I'm not sure I do myself! But I meant to ask if this was the usual thing every July?"

She smiled innocently. "I thing your Superiority ask eef there honorably exist ducks — lit' ducks in July?" she said, with a dimple, a very naughty dimple, in one cheek.

Then they both laughed.

The soft night air was full of the murmur of gentle voices, the sighs of farewell to the Returning Ghosts, yet they had laughed quite foolishly and together! She blushed. She was overcome with her own temerity, and her little hands fluttered under her sleeves. For two are not quite strangers who have laughed together, and this was a foreign barbarian; moreover, it was not quite true that she had thought he spoke of ducks! Ducks might have existed in his mind, but the little Japanese girl shivered; she feared she was becoming lamentably wicked in her heart, and also worldly.

Jack Hallard saw the distress on the wonderful, small face, and his laugh died on his lips.

"I saw you launching your boat," he said gently, "and — forgive me — is it wrong to ask what you do this for to-night?"

"For my mother's spirit," she replied quite simply; "thad was her boat."

"Oh, I say, I beg your pardon! What a stupid brute I am to ask questions." He was really penitent, for he had one of the kindest hearts in the world, but he blundered on: "So, it's true that you believe that the spirits of the dead come back?"

She nodded, her little hands still under her sleeves. Her lips quivered slightly. "The gods permit them to come back to this world for three days in the seventh month. We feast them; the third night, ad midnight, they return to the Meido in the shōryōbune—lig you see. Maybe my august father also dead," she added softly; "I do not honorably know. My mother? It is now many moons, ver' many moons, sinze she became a Buddha, and I —" she looked up suddenly, not at him, but at the twinkling lights on the purple sea, and the flare of her lotus lantern fell on the gold threads of her kimono, illuminating her like a text of Scripture — "Many time, ver' many times I wish I hav' been in the sleeves of Jizo! I'm so lamentably lit-tle, so left all alone. But see how honorably the light burns!" She shaded her eyes with one hand, pointing seaward with the other. "It burns still!" She forgot Hallard;

she held out both hands toward the shōryōbune. "Sayonara!" she whispered.

Hallard was strongly impressed. The small, light figure seemed to poise as delicately as a bird on the little foot in its snowy tabi, the rosy hands were outstretched in the most caressing gesture of farewell, the face, half sorrowful, half joyous, was illuminated, the spirit seemed to shine through a transparent veil of flesh. He was reminded of a curious story related by a Japanese priest, a story of the personal Buddha, the Hotoke-San, the spirit within. He saw that she had forgotten him, that her soul traveled out to sea with the shōryōbune. Here, at least, was conviction. He had been watching a ceremony, to him at once curious and childish, a mere rite of superstition, but he paused abruptly before her. She believed, and the power of faith is mighty as the mustard-seed. He no longer scoffed in spirit; he did not even smile.

The beautiful young face stood out of the night like an exotic flower; the shadowy figure sparkled with its threads of gold, like the scroll of the law; the small hands fluttered again.

"Sayonara!" she breathed softly.

Then she turned toward him once more, but she did not look at him; the inspired priestess was gone, the little Japanese girl was there. Again she clasped her hands under her sleeves.

"The night is augustly beautiful," she said naively. "O-Tsuki San, the Lady Moon, begins to smile at us — see!" she pointed at the orange rim of the moon, just rising above the sea.

"It's beautiful," Hallard agreed, "but in a little while it will shine so brightly that we can't see the Bon lanterns."

"But with our hearts' eyes we will alway see them, lig we do now," she answered quickly; "for three days they hav' been permitted to be with us. Can we forget them?"

"I'm sure you'll never forget them," he replied, "but — well, to me, it's a bit uncanny. I don't suppose you know what that means? But, in my country, we think of these spirits of the dead as ghosts, and some people are afraid of them."

"Are you?" she asked, with great sympathy.

Hallard laughed a little sheepishly. "I hope not! I believe I'm a jolly coward about the next world after all, little girl, and you don't seem one bit afraid."

"In another birth you may be honorably less afraid — lig me!" she remarked, with gentle compassion.

"Look here, I'm not such a coward as all that!" he exclaimed, conscious of blushing hotly in the moonlight.

"It is said thad sometimes we hav' nine souls," she continued, with the same gentle sympathy;

"it is possible thad only one of your august souls is afraid."

"Good Lord, I'm not a cat! I haven't nine lives!" Hallard protested hotly.

She suddenly looked up at him, with just the suggestion of coquetry in her face, and her long eyes glowed. "I do not thing thad your Superiority is altogether afraid," she remarked demurely.

"Then I've scored a point," retorted Hallard quickly; "if I'm not afraid, perhaps I can be instructed."

"It's honorably possible," she admitted.

"The point is evidently the instruction," he continued gravely, "and, if I have nine souls, it is absolutely wicked to neglect all nine of them, don't you think? To use your English, who will augustly teach me?"

She looked down at the crinkled sands.

"There are many priests ad the great temple ad Kamakura, ver' many," she replied; "there are also honorably learned priests ad Enoshima, and ver' many in Tokyo."

"It's awfully kind of you to tell me," said Hallard dryly, "but, do you know, I don't believe I'd learn a thing from those old chaps."

She sighed. "It is ever to be regretted."

"That's the way I look at it. Couldn't you — well, couldn't you enlighten me about my souls yourself?"

She drew her sleeves quite together over her

little hands. "I'm lamentably stupid," she replied meekly; "your Superiority would learn nothing; I ver' stupid!"

"I'm not quite of your opinion," Hallard began, "I —"

But they were interrupted.

"O-Umè!" cried a boyish voice; "Ume-no-hana!"

"It is Masamitsu," she explained, and answered softly, for the first time aware that the crowd was drifting from her, as the little shōryōbune drifted away in the mists, before the rising moon.

"I thought you just said you were alone," Hallard remarked, looking down at the boyish figure below them on the beach, the same he had seen with her launching the boat.

She shook her head. "There was still Masamitsu; he wants me. Our little boat has gone; our mother's Buddha has passed over. See, the track of the moon! O-Tsuki San has left the gold of her sandals upon the sea;" she pointed at the long, beautiful track of gold across the darkening bay.

But Hallard was regarding her. "You haven't yet told me your name, little maid of the sea-foam," he said.

"It is Umè," she answered softly, "but your Superiority must not remember it."

"But I must!" he laughed; "why not, O Umè San?"

The fluttering hands disappeared again into her

sleeves, as she stood looking out to sea. "I do not know," she murmured; "I am greatly to be afraid! O-Tsuki San is showering her gold. Do you know whad they call it — the Chinese? Thad wavering, wriggling line behind the moon? It comes to me, and —" she turned and looked at him, her face whitened by the moon — "your Superiority, I am afraid!"

"Afraid of the moon?" he laughed again, and heartily. "O Umè San, you're afraid of shadows."

She nodded. "It is thad! I'm afraid of it, of thad bright, sparkling, scaly thing. You and I stand here before it, is it not so? Yes? And they call it —" she lowered her voice — "they call it the 'Golden Dragon.'"

Hallard still smiled incredulously. "And you are afraid of the Golden Dragon?"

"To-night I am afraid!" She turned and waved her hand to Masamitsu, whose impatience was audible. "To-night a great fear has horribly laid hold of me; my heart is ver' small and cold — lig a stone. I hav' look too long ad the Golden Dragon!"

"Umè-ko!" called the boy's high treble.

"I come!" she replied, in her own tongue. Then she waved her hands seaward.

"Wait! Just a word more —" said Hallard.

But lightly as a spirit of the sea she had drifted from him, whether over the dunes or into the sea-foam it was impossible to tell. The other figures

crowded nearer; the mourners were leaving the beach. Hallard pushed his way among them.

"O Umè San!" he called.

There was no answer, only the soft continuous murmur of Japanese. As he ran along the sand-dunes, he thought he saw her figure ahead of him. He followed, only to become aware, at last, that he had lost his way in the throng.

"Sayonara!"

It seemed to float back to him. The girl's voice had a soft witchery all its own; the farewell was almost a caress from her lips.

He climbed the bluff and looked about him. Like shadows the gentle crowd had dissolved. The beach was deserted and the waning moon rose splendidly. Across the bay was its shining track, the terror of Umè, the Golden Dragon.

Hallard looked down, not sure that he was not bewitched. The figures had gone, but through the violet mists below the moon he saw a single pallid light, the last lantern of the shōryōbune. It burned in a tiny point; it wavered like a will-o'-the-wisp, it danced on the Tide of Returning Ghosts. Then, suddenly, it dropped over the edge of the world.

Her voice came back to him, or did he dream that it came? Out of the mystery of that perfect night, the farewell of Nippon, "since it has to be!" Caressing, sweet, sad, because so inexorable.

"Sayonara!"

III

HALLARD awoke the next morning in his room at the Kaihin-in at Kamakura. He turned over in bed and stared out through the half-open shoji into the hama-matsu. He looked deep into their graceful boughs, and through their black-green caught glimpses of a long blue line keen against the sky, — the distant line of the sea. A breeze stirred and the pines whispered among themselves, whispered, perhaps, of the sea and the Island of the Tortoise and the Dragon King.

The soft lucidity of the atmosphere lent to the simple scene a strange beauty that had already cast its spell upon Hallard. He got up and went to the window, strangely possessed with the idea that he had dreamed of a wonderful beach, of the spirit lanterns aglow on a summer sea, and of a little, flowerlike maiden who had been afraid, absurdly afraid, of the Golden Dragon.

Before him were vivid realities; children were playing in pine woods; a kurumaya, in his blue coat and drawers, sat on the ground wiping his head with a blue towel, covered with white hieroglyphics; a fisherman, his naked brown back still

glistening with sea-spray, was selling shining silver fish to a musumē from the inn. The air was fragrant with the aromatic scent of the pines, the sky was splendidly blue; the glory of the day had swept away the vapors and the spirits of the night.

Hallard stood unconvinced. It was, indeed, broad day, and this was Kamakura; he had surely returned last night from Horiuchi, but that other vision by the moonlit bay, was that also real? Or had the little sea-nymph, in her gray robes with their gleaming scroll-work, their butterfly-winglike sleeves, gone down to the sea in the shōryōbune?

Then he started, for he had become suddenly aware that the kurumaya who squatted in the sand was almost hunch-backed, that he thrust his head out like the tortoise of Enoshima. For, while he looked at him, the man turned slightly and glanced up obliquely at the Englishman in the window. Now, to the latter, the faces of most Japanese were as much alike as a row of earthenware platters; but this face was distinguished from the others by a malignity that reminded Jack Hallard of the distorted faces of the Ni-Ō, the Two Kings, the little Japanese gods he had seen in Yokohama covered with white pellets of prayer, spit upon their hideous bodies by the faithful. Gnomelike, vindictive, unforgettable as the Ni-Ō, were the face and figure of the Ambassador's visitor!

Hallard stood looking at him; at another time the incident would have slipped from his mind, but something in the man's manner at the Embassy had irritated him, and he wondered now what had brought a poor kurumaya all the way from Tokyo to Kamakura. Oddly enough, Hallard was possessed with the idea that there was a peculiar significance in that oblique upward glance, that the Japanese runner had seen him on the beach at midnight and had read his thoughts. Yet the kurumaya was again quietly mopping his head with his blue towel and smiling the eternal Japanese smile.

Fully infatuated with the thought that there was an actual significance in the man's presence there, in front of his window, Hallard turned in time to see his own fusuma slide to admit the freckled face and red head of his servant, Patrick Maloney, ex-sergeant in his regiment, ex-policeman and ex-jockey, but one of the kindest-hearted big Irishmen outside of Dublin. He brought in Hallard's boots and set them down irreverently on the immaculate mat.

"Is yer honor fer stayin' here the day?"

"That's a question that I haven't answered yet myself, Pat," Hallard replied good-naturedly. Then a thought occurred to him and he indicated the window. "Maloney, did you ever see that man before, the one squatting in the sand opposite?"

Pat looked out. "Sure!" he assented promptly; "it's the haythen tay-dhrinker that's afther bleedin' th' ould mon. I beg yer honor's pardon, the Ambassydor."

Hallard sat down and began to roll a cigarette. "So, you think the kurumaya is begging of his Excellency?"

Pat's blue eyes twinkled. "I think he be's afther bleedin' him, sorr. He steps around aisy-like an' says he ter his Honor, 'Five hundred mon, sorr, or I'll squake!' Five hundred mon being about an eighth av nothing, wan av these haythens could live on it fer a gination. Th' Eyetalian ates grass an' the Jap dhrinks it, with some biled rice an' a little rotten fish added aisy-like."

Hallard laughed. "How engagingly cheap in these days of high prices, Pat."

"It be, sorr. These haythens live on a pinny a wake, yer honor, an' biled rice with th' insect powder that they sprinkle over their clothes, whin they have enny — which isn't often."

"I thought it was dry perfume, not insect powder, Pat, and I believe it's really sandalwood."

"It may be, yer honor, but it smells loike insect powder, an' I should think they'd be afther needin' it whin they all wash in wan tub. At the Imbassy, sorr, they take turns in the servants' quarters, but, bliss yer soul, sorr, they all gits into that wan tub! Wan night, it was hot, an' the wather was bilin', an' the butler-san had

been in, an' the cook-san, and the girl-san that does up the bids, an' the washyman-san, and thin, says Unky, rubbin' his hands an' grinnin' ter bate the band; ' Will the honorable Maloney-San ' (maning me!) ' augustly into the tub git?' ' What,' says I, ' into the tub av dhirty wather afther sixteen haythen-sans? Not on yer life! Come out here,' says I, ' an' I'll smash the grin clane off of yer, ye squint-eyed mutt!' "

Hallard laughed. " Did he come out, Pat? "

" Divil a bit, sorr; he kept on rubbin' his hands and bowin' and scrapin', an' augustly-niver-to-be-kicked, begging me pardon. Yer honor, betwane the naygur in India an' the naygur in Japan there's moighty little pickin', an', in my opinion, they'd both be afther carryin' knives in their boots loike the Eyetalians."

Hallard laughed again, laying his cigarettes in little rows in his case. " Maloney," he said, after a moment, while Pat was engaged in brushing his clothes, " go down-stairs and engage that kuru-maya; he speaks English, I know. Tell him I want a kuruma to go over the hills to Horiuchi Bay and back to the temples here."

" Very good, sorr." Pat hesitated, woebegone. " Thin yer honor manes ter sthay the day? "

" Yes," Hallard replied thoughtfully, " I think I'll stay here until to-morrow morning."

Maloney sighed. Between Kamakura and Tokyo, with the British Embassy, there was a

great gulf fixed. There was not even beer at Kamakura, and saké had a curious effect on Pat's nervous system. Neither was he interested in the great Buddha, but he went down-stairs obediently, and, while Hallard dressed himself, he heard Pat wrangling with the deformed kurumaya over the difference between a sen and a mon.

Hallard had intended to spend the day elsewhere, had really expected to meet Dean at Yokohama, but, strangely enough, the golden beach drew him with a spell as subtle as the magic of the East. Would it look the same in the broad morning sunshine as it had at midnight, lit by the fantastic lanterns of the Bon? And would that graceful little gray figure rise from the sea-foam at his feet? Sea-nymph or daughter of the Dragon King, she seemed made of sea-foam and moon mist, a creature of dreams and fantasy, too delicate, too charming to be mere flesh and blood.

Then it occurred to him that his mood was absurd, that the spell of the moonshine was indeed on him, and he laughed lightly and went down-stairs to his breakfast of silvery fish and bamboo shoots, served on the delicate green leaves, with tea which he could not drink, in spite of the efforts of the little musumë, who served it on her knees. While he ate, he could see the long line of the sand-dunes and the shoulder of the hill which hid Enoshima, the Island of the Tortoise,

where they used to worship Benten Sama, and where they sell quite wonderful shells and the great hermit crabs. Maloney came at last with the information that the kurumaya would take him anywhere in the neighborhood of Kamakura for the usual fee, having been beaten down by Pat from more extravagant demands.

"I'd be afther watchin' him, yer honor," Pat advised, in a rich undertone; "in a horse, sorr, that kind av an eye manes a divilish baste with a hard mouth, loikely ter kick an' bite. Kape yer hand on the bit, sorr, an' niver turn yer back."

Twenty minutes later Hallard recalled this advice without surprise. It was true that the kurumaya had a vicious eye. But he spoke English exceedingly well and his name was Inouyé, so he said. Like Maloney, Hallard felt a singular distrust of the smooth Oriental smile; on this particular face it had an effect more sinister than reassuring; it was a smile that never came off. Yet Inouyé, standing between the shafts of his little jinrikisha, was a figure of submission, from his big, white straw hat to the palmetto strings which bound his straw sandals.

"Will your augustness be to Enoshima carried?" he asked mildly.

Hallard seated himself in the kuruma and waved his hand toward the blue line of the sea. "No, to Horiuchi," he said; "down there where they launched the shōryōbune last night. You

know, Inouyé? ” As he spoke, he looked keenly at the runner. But the face of Inouyé was as the faces of the Two Kings.

Nevertheless, he took up the two shafts and began to bob up and down between them, showing himself to be a very swift runner in spite of his deformity. Hallard watched his blue back as they passed beside the green gorges and little rivulets, as the path wound in and out before it descended to the beach beyond Horiuchi. The man was old and obviously deformed, yet he was dragging the kuruma down the soft, sandy road, and thus really carrying a young man of twice his height and weight. Hallard felt a pinch of compassion; after all, was he justified in gratifying the caprice that had made him hire Inouyé? He leaned back in the little jinrikisha in a very ill humor; we are never amiable in those infrequent moments when we see ourselves as others see us. What right had he to assume that the Ambassador's visitor had any knowledge of the little sea-nymph, simply because the oblique eyes looked maliciously intelligent? He would dismiss Inouyé on the beach and walk up to the temples himself. It was all moonshine!

Then suddenly he forgot this compunction. They turned the corner of the bluff and beheld the bay. The breakers were rolling high, for the Buddha Flood had left a troubled ocean; deep called unto deep, and the salt of it was in the air.

He halted Inouyé and got out, and the keen wind blew in his face like a caress. As he climbed the sand-dunes, he almost expected to see a little gray figure ahead of him, a flowerlike face with the mystery of eyes that had been scarcely revealed at midnight, with little fluttering hands that hid in the winglike folds of gleaming sleeves. But he saw, instead, a wonderful ocean, a golden beach smooth swept by the receding breakers, and beyond, between the transparent blue of sea and sky, the sacred crest of Fuji.

The day reveled in splendor. He shaded his eyes and looked out to sea. The shōryōbune were gone forever, the Departed Spirits had reached their goal; not a single frail craft came back with the wash of the tide. The lanterns of the Bon mocked him no more; instead, the yellow junks lay lazily at anchor, not a sail lifted. A little Japanese girl came to sell her basket of shells, and other children hovered at the edge of the water, venturing far in when it receded, running out with screams when it came again.

He looked keenly among them, he looked long down the golden beach, but the slender figure in gray did not rise from the sea. Surely he had dreamed; instead of the inimitable "Sayonara!" he heard a sea-gull's scream. The whim seized him again. He turned abruptly on Inouyé.

"Where is O Umè San?" he asked sharply.

Inouyé looked at him a moment, inscrutable and

bland, then the bristling black head bowed on a level with the kurumaya's belt.

"If the master will speak never-to-be-forgotten words to my unworthiness, I will humbly answer. Who may O Umè San be?"

"Oh, go to the devil!" Hallard exclaimed, with impatience.

"When your augustness returns to Kamakura, it will cost but two sen to go to the yamabushi at Enoshima."

"And what the devil is that?"

Inouyé extended his hands, palms down, as his countrymen do when they beckon. "A yamabushi will cast out devils for two sen."

Hallard hardened his heart. He turned to the jinrikisha. "Instead, we will go to the temples," he remarked.

Then, quite suddenly, he laid his hand on the kurumaya's submissive blue shoulder. "No, no, Inouyé, I think I'll have that myself," he said, with a flash of excitement, and he quietly took a little straw sandal from the runner's reluctant fingers. Inouyé had very unwisely stooped to reclaim it from the edge of the tide.

Hallard turned it over in his hand and looked at it. It was small beyond belief, and the straps were of mauve velvet, the color of her obi. Yet it might have been any child's sandal, so light, so delicate, so suggestive of the slender foot that had worn it. He looked curiously across it at the

kurumaya. But Inouyé's face was like an earthenware platter from which every vestige of thought had been sponged. He had the air of one who was past surprise; manifestly the foreign barbarian had let his souls get separated, which is the native conception of madness. Undoubtedly Hallard Sama was quite mad.

But the foreign lunatic brazened it out. He put the little damp sandal well down into his pocket. "Temple now, Inouyé," he commanded, without feeling for the poor blue back.

But just at that moment there was a hail, a decidedly jolly and friendly hail, from the dunes. Hallard looked up and saw a thick-set figure in gray tweeds, with an immense straw hat that rivaled the kurumaya's.

"Dean, as I'm a sinner!" he muttered; "how jolly inconvenient!" Then he made a trumpet of his hands. "Hello! I'm coming up!"

The Reverend Thompson Dean had known Jack Hallard first at Eton, and he had the merit of great faithfulness in friendship; he waved energetically.

"Coming!" Hallard shouted again, while he fumbled in his pocket for the money to pay Inouyé and discharge him.

The kurumaya was possibly disappointed. "The kuruma," he questioned, "will not go honorably walking then?"

"Honorably wading in sand, Inouyé," Hallard

replied, with more good humor than he had shown before that morning.

Inouyé accepted his pay humbly, with many genuflections, but he stood watching Hallard cross the dunes to meet the English chaplain. If the truth could have been told, Inouyé had some very curious impressions, but the foreign barbarian paid well, and there is consolation in spoiling the Egyptian.

Meanwhile, Hallard was approaching Dean, and the Reverend Thompson beamed good-naturedly upon him. He was one of those blond men who sunburn the color of a tomato, but his smile was sunshine. He had a heart as light as a two-year-old.

"Hello, Jack!" he shouted, "I got the finest, speckliest trout you ever saw; you missed it, staying behind in Tokyo."

"I'm always missing it," Hallard retorted, with feeling; "I've just succeeded in missing it again."

The chaplain gave him a slightly puzzled glance. "Maloney sent me down here," he explained; "he seems to have about the same view of you that Polonius had of Hamlet."

Hallard laughed, coloring slightly under the other's humorous eyes. "Pat's a gigantic fraud; don't place any confidence in him. I was going up to see the great Buddha. It's a bit of a walk from here, I believe."

"Longish," Dean admitted cheerfully; "I've

just been there, looking at the thousand-year-old camphor tree. It's fifty feet around the giant; I measured. Where's De Freece? "

"Doing duty with the Old Man in Tokyo, in my room," Hallard replied, chuckling; "they're probably having it hot and heavy by this time."

Dean glanced at him keenly. "Overton seems out of temper, eh? "

"Don't mention it; he's bullying everything from the cook to the interpreter. I got three days' leave for fear he'd bully me."

"I'd hoped you'd get to Kyoto, and go up country fishing with me."

"I came down here for the Bommatsuri."

"Oh!" said Dean.

They were climbing the road now that leads back, through many lovely windings, from the bay. Below them lay the little brown hamlet, behind a blue wonder of sky and sea, with the ghostly far mountain throned in mists. It was very dusty and still. The sound of breakers grew fainter and ever fainter; presently they would see the beginning of the rice-fields of Kamakura.

"It's quite the most wonderful sight," Hallard went on, "the launching of the shōryōbune at midnight. I saw it last night. I can't forget it! The little fairy fleet on the phantom sea; and evidently they believe in the Returning Ghosts, Dean; I was convinced of it. I seemed to feel it. This

absolute conviction is a tremendous kind of thing; wherever you find it, it seems to sweep the soul clear of littleness. They're curious creatures. There's a charm, a subtle spell about their queer beliefs."

"It is well, in these days," agreed the Reverend Dean quietly, "to believe devoutly in anything."

"Even in a little boat of barley straw laden with food for ghosts?" asked Hallard, smiling, as he plunged his hand into his outer pocket in search of an elusive handkerchief. He drew out, instead, a little straw sandal with mauve velvet straps, and turned red for the second time under the chaplain's whimsical glance.

The Reverend Dean stooped and cut a slip of bamboo grass; he was thinking deeply. "Is that a shōryōbune?" he asked dryly.

Meanwhile, Inouyé, left alone with his kuruma, had remained only a few moments looking after the two foreign barbarians. Satisfied that they would not return, he took up the shafts again and pattered swiftly up the one straggling street of the little hamlet by Horiuchi Bay. He traveled rapidly, his ugly head thrust forward, his mushroom hat shading his sinister face. He passed house after house, and the women gazed after him; some closed their shoji abruptly, for Inouyé's face was a face to conjure fear; one woman even came out and scattered dried peas, which are very potent as a charm against devils.

At the very end of the little street Inouyé stopped and called sharply. "O-Yoshi!"

A Japanese woman came out of the little hut and prostrated herself; she was very humble, for she was frightened.

"She is honorably ready, master; she will not keep you long waiting."

"Be quick," said Inouyé; "the girl did immodestly talk with a foreign barbarian last night. Saigo will be offended if she be not soon back."

"Umè-ko!" the woman cried, clapping her hands, "Umè-ko, make haste!"

"Honorable Aunt, I hear and respectfully obey," replied Umè softly, as she came out in her little gray kimono with its scroll-work of gold and its mauve obi.

She looked at Inouyé and shivered; she hated and feared the deformed runner, but she had no choice, for they were very poor. Moreover, she had come to visit her aunt for only the three days of the Bon, and no more was permitted to her. Umè looked out over the blue bay of Horiuchi and saw the lazy yellow junks; in her ears the sea whispered. Her young heart sank, and she knelt timidly before O-Yoshi.

"Condescend to remember me, Honorable Aunt," she whispered, "for I go."

But Yoshi only laid her hand on her head. "Hush!" she said sternly. "Umè-ko, you are miserably of barbarian blood; your mother's

people do not so weep. Honorably obey Owannon; forget your miserable aunt."

Umè rose dumbly, her flowerlike face white. She knew that she had been bitterly reproached for the curse of her barbarian blood, as she folded her hands under her sleeves and followed Inouyé. He put her into the jinrikisha and took up the shafts.

Umè watched his hideous blue back as they descended the village street. Her very heart felt numb; it was over, — her little hour of freedom, her little hour of daylight and sunshine and sea and sky. Should she ever see the yellow junks again on the blue, blue water? The little hands clung together under the winglike sleeves, the little white soul was stretching its wings; the world, the great world, of which she knew so little, awaited her, and the heart of Umè San was exceedingly afraid; but the blood of the samurai flowed in her veins, from her mother, and of death she was not afraid.

Then she heard a familiar cry; her brother was shouting to them. Masamitsu, already almost a young man, leaped half naked from the sea and ran after them, his lithe brown figure swift and strong as an Athenian runner.

"Umè-ko!" he cried, "you shall not go; you shall not go!"

She leaned forward and looked at him; her face glowed and softened with affection. "Oh,

Inouyé, let me speak to him!" she pleaded; "let me bid him good-by."

"Lord of Hell!" shouted Inouyé fiercely; "must I wait for children? Hold your worthless tongue, girl!"

Umè San sank back in the corner of the kuruma and hid her face in her long gray sleeves; she quivered under the insult of the coolie's anger. No longer did she hear the voices of the sea, the whisperings of the shells which she exceedingly loved; she heard Masamitsu's passionate cry and it pierced her soul.

"Umè-ko, come back, come back! I — even I — will pay the price!"

The sand-dunes echoed it, the sea whispered it: "Come back!" The voices of her childhood called her, and Umè's face was hidden in her sleeves.

IV

THE Garden of the Dragon stands upon a hill, and there is a hedge of close-clipped, evergreen mochi tree around it, and against that hedge, on the inner side, ripple the golden waves of yama-buki. The gateway is of orange-thorn and wistaria, and on either side are two stone lanterns in the shape of sleeping dragons; at night their yellow light shines on the gate and glimmers on the lotus pond within. There are hundreds of old, gnarled plum trees, that in the spring drift white with bloom; and there are little hedges and small, deep grottoes, and one great camellia tree crimson with flowers. While, all over the Garden of the Dragon, stand little tea-houses, with little bronze dragons under their eaves, either open to the day, or with closed shoji and tinkling samisen.

From the highest one you can see on one side Yedo Bay, and on the other, the gleaming rice-paddies that stretch almost all the way to Tokyo. The keeper of the Garden of the Dragon is a wonderful old woman, with a face as shriveled as a preserved persimmon, and eyes that cut like little knives, exceedingly cruel little knives. Behind her back, the irreverent call her "Sodzu-Baba," after

the Old Woman of the Three Roads, to whom the dead must pay three rin or she will strip them of their clothes and let the poor departed cross the River of the Three Roads naked. But to her face she is Owannon San, the richest keeper of a tea-house in Japan, and a terrible old woman whom the geisha girls dread, for she has neither faith nor compassion nor fear, and she is exceedingly rich and merciless. There is no stranger old woman between Yokohama and Tokyo than Owannon, the wife of Saigo Ōkami; and Ōkami signifies "the wolf."

At noonday, when it was exceedingly hot and dry, and not a ripple of breeze stirred the golden yama-buki, Owannon stood in the center of her garden, her rich kimono one blurr of color and her obi of cloth of gold. She was leaning her slender, pointed, clawlike fingers on the table of lacquer, so polished that her fingers seemed reflected through a thousand depths, and she turned her head on one side, like a wicked magpie, and eyed the little geisha girls who were dancing in an open tea-house before a group of Japanese officials. Then she turned back again and regarded Inouyé, the deformed kurumaya, with an unwinking, brilliant gaze, her narrow vivid eyes shining persistently upon him, with the fascination of a snake's. Inouyé, squatting on the ground at the edge of the azaleas, sipped his tea and smoked his little silver pipe. The placidity of their faces

betrayed nothing, but they watched each other narrowly.

"The price miserably less than nothing is," said Owannon finally, in a low voice, very smooth and very cruel. "He can pay twice as much. You are a raw baby, Inouyé; the foreign barbarian fooled you. We told you to wring him, as the clothes are wrung in washing, to squeeze him like rice. Aa! you are a raw baby! Have we not the savage in our hands? And he offers this — this beggarly, ever-to-be-despised sum! Six hundred ryō! Is it possible? Deal truly with me, Inouyé San, or —"

Owannon drew her cruel fingers together over the polished surface, and immediately they drew together in reflected depths. The deformed runner watched them, fascinated, a strange sensation creeping up and down his spine.

"It is true! Lord of Hell, why should I spare the barbarian?"

Owannon thrust her head forward and looked at him out of half-closed eyes. "Dare never any to keep back!" she whispered; "dare it never, for surely would an Iki-ryo follow you forever!"

Inouyé stared at her, his blank, smooth face becoming again strangely like the Ni-Ō; but he secretly feared the terrible old woman, the wife of Ōkami the Wolf. How did she know that he meant to keep back half? What he said did not betray him,

"If I had but one soul, like the vile barbarian, I would not deceive you," he said gently. "Did I not bring to you again the miserable girl?"

Owannon nodded, looking aside at a little tea-house where the light, shining through closed shoji, etched exquisitely graceful shadows on the glowing screens. A geisha girl was dancing there, and now and then they heard her little drum, and the note was plaintive and haunting. Owannon looked intently at the shadows on the shoji, then she smiled at Inouyé.

"The great Prince Kojiro lingers," she said maliciously.

Inouyé laughed, not aloud but within, and his misshapen body writhed with mirth. "She is awfully pretty," he remarked.

"Bah! Half-caste, barbarian!" retorted Owannon scornfully. "It is a madness with Kojiro. He is old, he is easy to fool. He will pay much money!"

Inouyé gave his tea-cup to the kneeling musumë and sat there, tracing a pattern in the soft earth of the flower-bed with his stunted forefinger.

"Foreign barbarian will awfully pay also," he said, at last; "where is Saigo? I go back to Tokyo. I am poor; I pay five sen a day for the kuruma while I go to Odawara. I pay always, you never. Honorably reward your servant. Condescend!"

Owannon looked at him even more scornfully.

"Not now is time, but there —" she pointed at the lighted tea-house — "there is a very rich man, Inouyé."

There was a long pause, and in it their hearts beat greedily. Again they heard the geisha's little drum.

Then Owannon abruptly left him, moved slowly around a hedge of bamboo, and came to an open tea-house. There she stopped and smiled gently at Pat Maloney, who had just paid for Yokohama beer, instead of the tea which the little musumē offered on her knees. Mr. Maloney felt exceedingly dry. He had just come up from Kamakura with Jack Hallard and Dean, and his inner man, in open rebellion against saké, was spongelike in its reception of beer. If the truth be told, Mr. Maloney's stomach yearned exceedingly for his native food and drink.

Owannon turned her head on one side again, in magpie fashion, and eyed her visitor. As yet there were very few people in the garden, and it pleased her to converse with Pat Maloney, for reasons of her own.

"Hallard Sama will soon be here," she cooed, "so that I may offer to him a cup of tea?"

"Misther Hallard will be here in aboot twinty minutes, mum, an' his honor may dhrink tay if he wants it; but, begorra, I'd be sorry the day to b'lave his taste was so divilish bad, savin' yer prisince, mum."

Owannon smiled, the placid oval of her wrinkled face betraying nothing. "Hallard Sama has lately been sent to Tokyo?" she asked.

Pat looked at her uneasily; he had the feeling that he was being cross-examined, and her little, beadlike eyes belied the mild suavity of her expression; they seemed to be boring a long way into him. He evaded the question.

"You've a foine situvation here, mum, a garden av Eden with — savin' yer prisince agin, mum — with th' sirpint thrown in!"

Owannon looked around with conscious pride. "The garden is miserably unworthy, and the tea-houses but poor places," she said softly; "and the maidens here are rude, but your master will be honorably treated. Aa! Joyful it will be to welcome him."

A musumē knelt again before Maloney, who had just finished his beer.

"What is it you will order for the master?" Owannon asked, indicating the little musumē.

Pat leaned forward uneasily. "Git up," he said kindly; "I ain't the Dook av Connaught, nor yit th' Prince av Wales. I'm blissed if I know what ter order. At home I should be orderin' veal-pie an' some pratties, but here I'm expictin' a loive fish an' some biled rice, or a stork's leg. Git up, girlie, if ye ain't deaf. Hi, thire comes yer ould gintlemon with some av his niver-ter-be-forgotten granddaughters."

For the husband of Owannon, Saigo Ōkami, had just entered from a low wicket behind the yamabuki. He was a little old man with a polished bald head, and a full face with the skin drawn tight and yellow as a drum. He wore a rich, dark, native dress and rubbed his hands gently together as he looked at the three little geishas who had followed him. Small creatures were they, so gayly dressed that they looked like butterflies let loose in the summer garden. The three little faces were painted white and red, and their obis were brilliant as the wings of a dragon-fly.

Owannon beckoned to her husband; extending her hand with the palm downward, she waved gently three times. Saigo's bright, oblique eyes passed from her face to Pat Maloney. Then he came slowly forward, shoos the little geishas as a housewife sometimes shoos very young chickens.

Three yards away from Maloney, the three little maids dropped on their knees and folded their little hands. Their heads were gayly dressed with flowers and little shining pins, and their gay sleeves quivered like the wings of butterflies alighting for honey.

"It's a pritty soight," Maloney said dryly, "a moighty pritty soight. Is it six sen or sivinty-five for it, Mr. Saigo San?"

Owannon interpreted to her husband. "The

foreign barbarian desires to know the price. He, the beast, offers to us seventy-five sen!"

"Lord of Hell!" said Saigo, in Japanese to his wife, while he smiled sweetly upon Pat Maloney. "Let the foreign barbarian burn forever! The girls are not very pretty, but make him pay august full price."

Owannon spoke to Maloney. "My husband says that the little girl in between, O Tora San, can be sold to you for less than the others. Her parents are poor; in another birth they have greatly sinned, for in this they starve. The girl is cheap. They greatly desire to be sold into service to save their parents from poverty."

"Holy smoke! An' what am I ter do about it, mum? I'm not out ter hire a gurl fer the Imbassy. Cook-San would ate me aloive."

Owannon smiled placidly. "The second is still poorer; she also has a grandmother. Her name is Toki San."

"An' sure, do ye be afther sellin' th' grand-mither, too, or is it th' mither-in-law?" Mr. Maloney rose, sighing. "I've got wan, Mrs. Saigo, an' ef ye know av enny wan, in Japan, that will augustly buy a mither-in-law, begorra, mum, I'll sell; wan pound six an' no questions axed, transportation thrown in!"

The three little maids on their knees prostrated themselves, and only Tora looked up; there was

a dimple in her little round chin, as she smiled coquettishly.

"Holy smoke!" said Pat, under his breath.
"Holy smoke, th' pity av it!"

Saigo plucked at Owannon's sleeve, and both looked intently at the big Irishman.

"Augustly cheap," said Owannon softly. "O Tora San can never again be so cheaply bought. A good wife she would be."

Pat smiled a little grimly. "Fer me, mum?" He shook his head thoughtfully. "I'm afther bein' hitched already, mum, an' Bridget has a pinitratin' eye. I've known her ter know how many times I'd bin ter th' public house, though there's a church an' a cimiterie betwane. If I wint home with wan av these ladies, an' she dhropped loike that an' rubbed her nose on th' door-mat, I'd be afther gittin' inter hot wather. Bridget would see her. She'd be afther sayin': 'Misther Maloney, ayther th' liddy an' th' door-mat or you'll git!' An' git it would be! No, no, mum, ye ain't acquainted-loike with Mrs. Maloney; she's a foine woman, mum, but she can kape a mon in order, an' don't ye forgit it!"

Owannon looked at him strangely, but her face was impenetrably calm. She signed to the geishas to rise and they obeyed gracefully, shaking out their bright sleeves and smiling saucily at Maloney.

But the big Irishman had apparently forgotten

them. His eye was fixed on the clustering branches of a wistaria vine that was growing low, in a fanciful pattern, dwarfed by the magic touch of the gardener's skill. Suddenly Maloney thrust his hand into the foliage and pulled out the crumpled figure of the blue-clad kurumaya.

"Begorra!" he said dryly, "it's Mither Hallard's 'riksha boy and th' Ambassydor's pet." He deposited Inouyé on his feet. "I'm afther axin yer august pardon, sorr," he said. "I thought it was a blue towel; you're th' color av wan upside down, an' there's th' same quare markin' on yer back. It must be convanyient fer listenin', but it ain't good fer yer health ter be slapin' in th' grass. Honorably take a drap av — no, no, not tay, me boy, not tay! Mither av Moses, th' crayture is dhrinking tay fer a chill!"

Inouyé, unmoved by his abrupt introduction into the circle, was drinking the tea that had been brought for Maloney; as he drank it, he bowed and smiled at his discoverer.

Pat regarded him for a long moment with unmixed disgust.

"Well, I'm bate!" he said at last, "if iver —"

Little O Tora touched his sleeve. He started violently and looked around at her. It seemed to him that the plot thickened, but Tora smiled gayly and pointed toward the gate.

Hallard and Dean had just come in together and were standing there, looking on.

V

HALLARD called Maloney sharply.
 "Take these packages back to the station," he ordered, as the big Irishman came up, "and look after our suit-cases; we leave for Tokyo in an hour."

"Very good, sorr."

"You've had some lunch, Pat?"

"Sure, yer honor, but —"

Maloney hesitated and Hallard noticed it.

"What is it?"

The Irishman moved toward him confidentially, and Dean discreetly walked on.

"Yer honor, that crooked-neck 'riksha mon was squattin' in th' grass over there, loike a toad. I mane, sorr, the Ambassydor's pet Jap —"

"That will do, Maloney."

"Very good, sorr." Pat saluted and fell back, discomfited.

Hallard followed Dean yet more slowly up the embowered path. He did not wish to take his servant into his confidence, but, after all, this matter of a traveling kurumaya was rather unusual. Within three days he had been in three separate places, a feat he could not have accom-

plished on his own legs. After all, he must be making a good thing out of Overton. But why did he so persistently cross Hallard's path? Immediately rose a vision of the lonely beach of Horiuchi Bay, the lotus lantern, the little sea-nymph and the shōryōbune. Hallard lingered in the path, clipping the yama-buki with his stick, for the Reverend Dean had just been speaking of Maud Overton. In a few days her ship would reach Nagasaki.

Then Hallard heard the geisha's little drum. He roused himself and looked about him. They had come almost to the highest tea-house; the Garden of the Dragon lay below. A silver mist had rolled up in wonderful white feathers over the smooth blue of Yedo Bay, the golden red of the pine branches glowed deeply in the sun, some white storks stood in the rice paddies, and a little bullfinch twittered on the bough of the plum tree over his head. Again sounded the geisha's little drum!

Dean called to him. Owannon had chosen the tea-house for them, and a little musumē, planting two tall candlesticks in the ground, dropped on her knees as Hallard joined his friend.

Owannon smiled gently, looking from one to the other. "What is it you will command from my miserable house?" she asked sweetly.

"Oh, tea, Owannon," said Dean pleasantly, "tea and hi-okwashi. This foreign barbarian

will not like either, but I've learned to eat things Japanese."

"I am never to be more honored, danna sama," Owannon replied smoothly, with a gracious gesture. "My worthless girls will serve your augustness; condescend to forgive their awkwardness."

"We will be augustly delighted," retorted Dean, smiling, as he leaned back under the branching wistaria that really formed the tiny tea-house.

Owannon bowed three times and moved slowly away to lean over Saigo and Inouyé.

Hallard watched her grimly, resting his elbows on the lacquer table that had so recently reflected her cruel fingers.

"What a perfect old witch!" he remarked heartily; "an embodied nightmare!"

"Oh, she's quite wonderful!" Dean replied genially. "She's endlessly clever, and this is the very best tea-house I've seen in Japan. I like to watch her; she has a face as interesting as an Egyptian hieroglyphic, or the ideograph on that coolie's blue back, only I don't believe any one has the key to her personality. That old fellow, Saigo, who met me outside, is her husband and —"

"Henpecked," suggested Hallard dryly.

Dean laughed. "Exactly; and when you realize him it makes you respect the hen who has done the pecking. Owannon San is simply unique. Really her cuisine is delightful. I've got to eating

Japanese dishes here; she's educating me up to it."

"Being a sky-pilot, you can take more chances than the rest of us," Hallard retorted, smiling, his eyes still intent on the group by the azaleas. "Personally I don't like fish when they kick."

"Owannon's don't kick. You're troubled with an imagination, Jack. Try the simple life; follow my example and learn to eat with chopsticks."

Hallard was not listening. "Dean," he said abruptly, indicating the deformed runner, "ever seen that man before?"

The chaplain turned good-naturedly; he was in the mood to humor what he called Hallard's freakishness. "Which one? Oh, I see!" He thought, adjusting his eye-glasses, still benevolent. "Of course I've seen him, but —"

"Where?" Jack asked quietly.

Dean thought more deeply and slightly frowned. "I remember — inside the compound. I wonder how he got here? He isn't an Embassy runner, is he?"

Hallard shook his head.

The little musumë, returning with the tea on a lacquered tray, dropped on her knees to serve it. Dean took his tiny cup mechanically.

"I suppose these fellows travel a good deal; why shouldn't they? When you think of the

ground they cover, it's remarkable for them to stay at home. Speaking of personal beauty, though, Owannon strikes me as a gem compared with your friend."

"The fellow resembles a toad, but I fancy he's clever."

"I suppose it wouldn't do to suggest the jewel in his head," smiled Dean.

"Or the knife in his boot," retorted Hallard dryly.

"I admit that if he wore boots, I should share your suspicions," replied the chaplain; "but why don't you give the fellow his due? He apparently smokes the pipe of peace with Saigo, and I fancy both of them are scared of Owannon. I confess to being in awe of her myself. There's something remarkable in the very way she does her hair, with cement and shoe-blackening, that reduces me to a state of amiable submission. They tell me the poor things stay done for a week and sleep on wooden pillows. It fills me with amazement and awe."

Hallard was out of sorts. "You're getting flippant, Dean. Some of them do their hair quite charmingly with flowers."

The chaplain looked up over his cup of tea thoughtfully; his pleasant eyes were speculative. "That depends on the point of view," he remarked gently. "Personally I prefer fluffy locks, 'Saxon in hue.' Porcupine quills and cement omitted."

"In fine, you're full of race prejudices," declared Hallard promptly.

Dean was imperturbably amiable. "This to me! When I eat with chop-sticks and drink their tea? I defy you to do more!"

"I confess I'm beaten by the chop-sticks. However, that's a small matter if — Hello, there's De Freece!"

They both looked toward the gate, where Saigo was salaaming before a tall, thin, military figure that had something stiff and formal even in its bearing, for De Freece was exceedingly tall and exceedingly thin; even his long thin face was hollowed below the eyes, and he wore a conspicuous monocle.

"If one caught De Freece by 'Afric's sunny fountains,' burned black, it wouldn't be necessary to label him," smiled the chaplain; "he's the unadulterated article. Please observe the way he looks at Saigo!"

"Hello, De Freece!" Hallard shouted. "Come up here; Dean's eating hi-okwashi."

De Freece came up unsmilingly. "I've ordered Yokohama beer," he said; "it's beastly hot."

"What? The beer?" queried Dean provokingly.

De Freece put his monocle carefully into his left eye. "Look here," he remarked; "what a perfectly ripping idea it is to take the whole sides out of your house when you're warm, you know,"

and he indicated the little tea-house, upon whose illuminated screens a dancing shadow had been so beautifully etched.

The shoji had been pushed back, revealing a Japanese, magnificently robed in the native dress and reclining on cushions, while a geisha girl danced before him.

"He's some local dignitary," Dean remarked quietly, setting aside his tea-cup, "evidently a man of rank by his dress. But what brings you here, De Freece? We thought the Ambassador had you chained inside the compound."

"He sent me down to see the Consul," De Freece explained; "there's some trouble about a British sailor. One of the men off your ship, Dean, by the way. He's broken a Jap's head about a girl."

The chaplain's face sobered. "I thought the men had been behaving very well."

"Oh, he's fallen in love with a geisha and smashed a Jap's head," De Freece replied indifferently. "One has to expect such accidents. Temporary insanity, caused by heat and saké."

"I trust it isn't a case of murder," said Dean anxiously. "It makes such bad blood at once."

"Oh, they say the Jap will live. The girl is jolly pretty; some of them are in spite of their squint eyes."

"That one is over there," remarked the chaplain dryly, observing Hallard,

But Hallard was unconscious of his observation. He was leaning forward on Owannon's lacquer table, looking intently at the Japanese official who was being amused by the little geisha girl.

The man was of middle age, powerfully built, his strong dark face placid as a mask, his long eyes gleaming with a sultry hidden fire, like the craters of a volcano, his robes rich to magnificence, his bearing unmistakably that of the native dignitary. He, in his turn, was watching with singular intentness the graceful gestures of the little dancing girl.

She was a slender, beautiful creature, and, as she held up her arms with an indescribably graceful gesture, it seemed that she might be a winged Psyche. The great scarlet sleeves slipped back and fluttered like the quivering wings of a butterfly; the soft red draperies clung and swayed about her figure, soft as the sheathing calyx of a flower. There was a glint of gold embroidery, the blaze of scarlet, the twinkle of busy little feet in their snowy tabi, the glimpse of a flower-dressed, dainty head, and the wonderful pale oval of a face, — a face that neither smiled nor sparkled, that was innocent of the paint and powder of the geisha, that had an exquisite fairness that made her resemble one of Atami's tall white lilies, veiled in a scarlet cloud, or the lotus flower that lifts a pure and stately head above the river slime.

There was something inexpressibly fine in the

slender figure, the pale, delicate face, the pure arch of the brow. She danced easily, swaying slightly from side to side. Her slender hands held the open fan behind her head; the great scarlet sleeves were spread, filled with the breeze and fluttering; the folds of her robe floated about her graceful limbs. She turned, dancing directly away from the solemn figure of the Japanese, dancing toward the tea-house on the hill; behind her the geisha's drums beat merrily, the shrill note of the koto breaking through, high-keyed, keen, birdlike.

She turned, still swaying slightly, her little chin uplifted, and the white light fell full on her face. Involuntarily Hallard rose.

"Umè San!" he exclaimed, below his breath.

She seemed to hear him; she turned her face toward him, her little fan ceased its beautiful convolutions.

Hallard still watched her, transfixed in his amazement. Was it possible? Could this be his little sea-nymph? The maid of the lotus lantern?

Abruptly the geisha dropped to her knees and hid her face in her great scarlet sleeves. Abruptly, too, the music ceased.

The Japanese prince rose; his attendants flocked from the edge of the yama-buki. The troop of geishas fluttered around the little kneeling figure, like a flock of butterflies; they veiled her with their fluttering sleeves, and samisen and koto

sounded again in a final outburst of merry music, a mocking, teasing serenade.

Dean laid his hand on Hallard's arm. "Jack, Jack!" he said quietly, "you forget the British Embassy. That is the daimyō, Prince Kojiro, and those — are only little geisha girls!"

VI

UMÈ SAN, kneeling behind the half-closed shoji of the little tea-house, looked out on the Garden of the Dragon. The troublesome foreign barbarians were gone; so, also, was the great prince, Kojiro Hirata.

It was twilight; light mists twirled into fanciful scrolls over the rice paddies, the waters of Yedo Bay were pink with the reflection of the sky, the dragon lanterns glowed at the gate, and the samisen tinkled behind many lighted shoji.

Umè San saw none of these things; she saw only the strange figure of Inouyé, the deformed runner, as he talked with Saigo and Owannon. She was afraid of him; her brave little soul, that had risen to the height of self-sacrifice, quivered with a horror of some unknown evil. It was he who had sold her into slavery to Owannon, it was he who watched over her, as it seemed, with supernatural intuition. Her heart had failed her, and she had tried to escape at Horiuchi, only to be captured by Inouyé. And how evilly he had grinned!

She stretched herself out at full length on the mat, resting on her elbows, her little chin in her hands, her scarlet sleeves trailing like broken

wings. Her tea-house was dark; no one called her, and apparently they had forgotten her, since the tall barbarian with the blond hair had gone. She was quite alone in the world, and she had been sold for a term of years, as a dancing-girl, to feed her honorable aunt and her honorable aunt's sick son. It was right; had they not spent all to care for her, and for Masamitsu? Yet Umè San longed exceedingly to be free again, to walk, as she used to, barefoot on the pine needles, listening to the nightingale among the cherry trees of Yoshino. She could almost smell the tall yellow lilies that bloomed in the fields. Her heart sank low, but, on her mother's side, she was a daughter of the samurai, and her courage did not fail her. What she could do, she must; the gods could ask no more.

Yet she watched the deformed runner and her heart quivered, as an exquisite instrument of music might quiver at a touch. Why had they not let her see the stranger, the foreign barbarian? She knew that it had not been accident, that fluttering of the geisha girls around her, who had closed in with outstretched sleeves, hiding her completely while Inouyé took her away. She had heard the barbarian's voice, heard him ask for Umè San, and they had hidden her away. But why? Ah, that was the question. She mused on it, her chin clasped in the rosy hollow of her hands. He would pay better than most to see

her dance, and money was everything to Owannon. Yet, was she altogether sorry? She did not know. She wanted to see him again, yet she quivered with humiliation, for she had seen his face. He had been amazed to see her as a geisha girl; had he, this foreigner, had he recognized the daughter of the samurai? Or — Umè San hid her face forlornly in her hands — did he know that she was half-caste and poor? Her proud blood stung her; what cruel destiny had made her one, and yet not one, with her people? They had taunted her, taunted her with her white skin and blue eyes, for her long wonderful eyes were blue. Taunted her, the daughter of a samurai mother, called her half-caste and forsaken! Oh, Kwannon of the Single Grace, dared she make that one prayer now? Or — little Umè San flushed and trembled, as her woman's heart stirred deeply — would there be, in time to come, a moment more supreme than this? A prayer more keenly from her soul? A subtle intuition stirred in her young being; a joy that was nearer pain touched her heart. Life was casting its shadow upon her. She lay quite still, looking dreamily out at the Garden of the Dragon; she was a mere child, with a child's white soul unfolding at the touch of life, a child's imagining; she often had been very happy, but to-day she was afraid. And like a flower, at the touch of the warm wind of heaven, her soul trembled and unfolded.

While she lay there, dreaming, Owannon and her husband, Saigo, called "the wolf," and Inouyé bargained for their shares in the price that would be paid for her.

"The august lord, Kojiro, will a greatly desired price pay," said Saigo slowly; "he is mad about this worthless girl."

"He's an old fool," said Owannon sharply; "it is bad when youth's madness gets into old blood."

"He will pay more," chuckled Saigo; "he thinks her like a tennin in robes of gold. He would have paid the money to-day, but you would not condescend to listen."

Owannon swept aside his complaint. "Have we not the British Koshi Sama in our hands? He will pay, the great Prince Kojiro will pay; and to us the profit will be as the rice-fields when the harvest is good."

Saigo doubted. "How much will the foreign barbarian pay?"

Inouyé drew a pattern on the ground, his evil face averted, his bent blue back defeating scrutiny.

"Again I say, how much will the Koshi Sama pay?"

Owannon put out her clawlike fingers, clutching with the gesture of one receiving money. "How much?" she laughed wickedly; "as much as I desire. Every time I say to him 'pay,' he pays. The Koshi Sama is ours."

"Only if Kojiro marries the miserable girl," said Inouyé; "marry her he must, so says the Koshi Sama."

Again Saigo doubted. "The great Prince Kojiro? How then will you, and I, and Owannon miserably achieve so great a thing? Is he not already married, and to the daughter of the samurai, Nishida Enryō?"

Owannon repeated her gesture; she had an itching palm. "He divorced her; O Takè San loved the young samurai whom Kojiro caused to commit the seppuku. It is said that Takè drank his ashes in the saké, and is condemned to die also."

"How will we force the great prince to marry the half-caste, the barbarian's child?" demanded Saigo.

Inouyé rose from his squatting posture, and thrust his hideous face toward theirs. "We will tell him the honorable truth. We will tell him of the British Koshi Sama; that he serves Nippon by marrying Umè; that with her in his sleeve he rules the Koshi Sama, for he has his secret, he can threaten him! The foreign barbarian is afraid to have it known; he will do Kojiro's bidding."

The tight yellow skin on Saigo's face was stretched almost to cracking. "It is good, it is augustly good for Nippon!"

"Already I behold him married to her, I

behold the Koshi Sama in the dirt, I — " Inouyé stretched out both hands — " Lord of Hell, how I hate the foreign barbarian! " he cried, between his yellow teeth.

Owannon laughed, a mocking, teasing laugh. " Already is the young British barbarian in love with Umè San."

" And the British Koshi Sama? Will he not think his own countryman greatly to be preferred? " cried Saigo aghast.

Owannon looked at him out of narrowing eyes. " Why then does he fear to tell of Umè San? "

" The foreign barbarian with the yellow hair is no little trouble," said Inouyé; " to be in love with him is to be awfully foolish. He will pay seventy-five sen to a kurumaya to go — " he looked around for a simile — " to go across the Garden of the Dragon and pick up her shoe — pah! He is a fool."

" A fool can set a great fire in bamboo," said Owannon provokingly. " I remember when Saigo here made great smoke! Ma-a-a-a! If the young barbarian already knows this secret, if there is then no secret, we get no more money from the Koshi Sama; the well is dry like the rice paddies in the great drought. It is necessary to hasten all. Kojiro must marry the girl; the Koshi Sama must pay. It is as I told you, Inouyé; you must get more money, you must bleed the Koshi Sama."

" The Koshi Sama is dry," replied Inouyé

bitterly, "as dry as the springs are miserably dry in the great heat. If you sell the girl to Kojiro and she is gone, then will the Koshi Sama nothing pay. He pays only to shut the lips of three. When Kojiro knows, and Kojiro's grandmother, wherefore shall the Koshi Sama pay that they know not?"

Owannon broke a long spray of wistaria and tore it to little pieces in her fingers, her fierce narrow eyes fixed on Inouyé. "Is it true that you pay to us all, all?" she demanded dryly.

"I am beggared by you," whimpered Inouyé; "I pay five sen for —"

"Hush!" cried Saigo suddenly; "here is the messenger of Prince Kojiro."

"Aa!" said Owannon, between her teeth.

The messenger, a young Japanese boy, dressed in the simple blue shirushi-banten, with Kojiro's scarlet ideograph on the back, bowed low before her.

"His great augustness, the Ko-shaku, Kojiro Hirata, commands that you send to him the geisha girl, O Umè San."

Owannon continued to tear the wistaria tendrils cruelly, but her smooth face grew even more affable. "You will honorably tell the great Prince Kojiro that Owannon, his servant, prostrates herself; she is miserably afflicted, for the wretched girl, Umè San, is only to be obtained with great difficulty. She is not what she seems. Poor

Owannon dares not humbly to obey the great Prince's august command, until she humbly speaks with those who shall decide."

"Are you mad, Owannon San?" cried the messenger; "the great Prince Kojiro commands the geisha's presence. What are you and your miserable garden? I dare not return without the wretched girl."

"Three times do I prostrate myself," sighed Owannon, "yet can I not obey. The miserable girl is not mine; if I obey—" she threw up both hands—"I am not yet ready to meet Emma-Ō!"

"This is madness!" stormed the messenger. "Inouyé, are these people augustly mad?"

Inouyé shook his head sadly. "I greatly fear for you in another birth, Djiro," he said; "in this you surely must greatly desire to die. Go in peace; Owannon speaks truth."

The messenger was young and rash. "A mystery!" he sneered; "to the value of the girl increase—bah!" He spat upon the ground. "The great Prince Kojiro will—"

Owannon beckoned. "Come hither, Djiro," she said softly; "I will the message write. Honorably return then with the words I write."

"The great Prince Kojiro devours his enemies like fish!" shouted Djiro wildly.

Owannon touched him gently on the sleeve and beckoned. The lad turned and looked into her

eyes. Her gaze held him; he shivered and swayed upon his feet. She smiled and beckoned for the third time, and he followed her like a lamb; once he stumbled on the gnarled root of an old plum, but he followed. Her eyes held him like a snake's.

Owannon had seen the foreign barbarian returning, and had discreetly withdrawn Kojiro's blatant messenger. Jack Hallard came up the path toward Saigo and Inouyé. It was now night, but the light of gay lanterns fell on his tall figure and outlined his English head. Umè San, lying full length on the mat, saw him; her heart beat a little quicker with excited expectation, and she raised herself again on her elbows and listened. Her scarlet sleeves still trailed helplessly; they seemed to have a language of their own.

Hallard had already asked for her; she rose to her knees and laid her hand expectantly on her little drum.

But Saigo rubbed his hands gently together and bowed, shuffling his feet. "Honorable danna sama, she no longer stays in this miserable tea-house," he said blandly; "she has returned to her relations."

"Where are her relations?" Hallard asked sharply. He did not believe a word of it.

"Augustly long way off," Saigo replied, waving wild hands; "long, very long way off."

"Yes," Hallard opened his note-book, "but where?"

Saigo looked at Inouyé, but Inouyé continued to look like one of the Two Kings.

"Atami," Saigo said at last; he smiled but he was not very happy. This foreign barbarian was too big; he seemed several miles high.

"Atami? That is vague enough," Hallard remarked, "and they have names. What is her name? Not just Umè San?"

Saigo stroked back his sleeves. "Half-caste," he said briefly, "has no name."

"Oh, the devil!" Hallard exclaimed involuntarily, suddenly comprehending. "But the child has relations? I wish the names of her relations." This time Inouyé looked at Saigo, and Saigo at Inouyé. They were deeply amused, but neither showed it.

"I do not know their names," Saigo said humbly.

"What nonsense!" Hallard exclaimed indignantly. "Do you think me a baby? When will this young girl return?"

"I will ask Owannon —" Saigo began.

But Inouyé suddenly interrupted him. "I beg your forgiveness; Umè San will return here the day after to-morrow," he said, with courtesy.

Hallard looked at him angrily. It was certain he could get nothing more, and he was puzzled and annoyed by their singular refusal to allow a

geisha girl to dance for a guest. He could not find a possible reason for the refusal, and he suspected that they had both lied to him. Yet the thought that his little sea-nymph was, after all, but a dancer in a tea-house was exceedingly distasteful. To see her it was evident that he must pay these scheming, evil-faced creatures. As, doubtless, the Japanese official had paid them, as others would pay. It was a question of money to see her dance, and she had seemed so fine and gentle and sweet! He was conscious of a feeling of keen disappointment; there was, after all, a bitter taste in the mouth.

And Umè San, on her knees in the darkness, watched the group in yet greater perplexity. He had asked for her and they had refused again to let her dance! It was inexplicable, for they loved money exceedingly, and —

Umè leaned forward to watch Hallard; he had left them, he was going to pass close to her tea-house. She held her breath, leaning close against the shoji. He passed, he was almost to the first bridge. Little Umè leaned over and softly, daringly, touched her little drum. He started and looked back. She held her breath again. Then he went on, turning yet once more to look back. The blundering barbarian! Umè sank down on her mat and laughed softly, the dimple showing in her cheek. She was as merry as a naughty child who has escaped detection; she threw her arms

around her little drum, the scarlet sleeves floating about it gayly. Meanwhile, Saigo looked at Inouyé. The kurumaya laughed inwardly, wriggling like a snake.

“What would you? He would not otherwise go. When returning time is come, then — then tell him Umè San is already a Buddha.”

Saigo took out a wonderful silk handkerchief and wiped the mosquitoes off his bald head. “On day after to-morrow I go to Tokyo,” he said affably; “I go honorably early!”

VII

IN the morning the Reverend Thompson Dean and Hallard tramped over to Omori.

The way was full of pictures; the little brown houses, here and there, were crowned with the green roof-plant. At one quaint gate, beside the pine tree, a pipe-mender solemnly cleaned a pipe for one rin; at another the buckwheat-man uttered his low musical cry, while the vender of love-charms talked persuasively to a young girl who peeped through the half-closed shoji, blushing and unconvinced.

The two barbarians crossed the lovely river, and the road grew yet more rural. Here and there were little wayside shrines; a jinrikisha went by, drawn by two trotting coolies; in the woods they heard the cry of the wild dove, the yamabato. Darkly and clearly cut against the sky rose the hills of the Hakone Range, and, nearer at hand, the wooded bluff of the Temple of Ikegami. It was past blossoming time for the "elder brother of the hundred flowers," but the plum trees grew abundantly on every side. Between gnarled trunks the white mist curled its beckoning fingers. They caught far gleams of Yedo Bay.

There was a charm, a mystery, an allurements.

It beckoned like the white fingers of the mist, the wonderful thin curls of vapor that veil Nippon in illusion and in mystery.

Sweetly called the yamabato. The feet of the barbarian followed the lure and the enchantment!

Hallard had refused to take the early train to Tokyo; he had even wired for another day's leave, and the chaplain knew it. However, Dean did not mention this, but instead talked persistently of cormorant fishing and the giant hermit crabs that he had found at Enoshima. As a subject, the crab permits of many harmless variations.

"The most immense creature," he said, with the fondness of the collector, "on my word, Jack, the shell would make a soup tureen. I'm having it prepared to send home to the museum. The women and children were selling smaller ones at Kamakura. One little girl had a beauty with her basket of shells; she wanted me to buy the whole outfit for five sen. These people ask so little that they make me feel like a cheat, until I find I've been skinned in some other way."

Hallard did not reply; his ear had caught the whistle of the Tokyo express.

They were still walking through a grove of old plum trees, the mossy turf soft under their feet, the shadows darkly green; but, here and there, where the sea's white feathers rolled away, the sunshine made yellow pools between. Nearer at

hand, the coolies were walking in the rice-fields, and once they heard the hoarse croak of a big blue crane, standing on one leg in the paddy, protesting against the intrusion of man.

"It's all extraordinary, I suppose," the Reverend Dean continued placidly, pursuing his subject, "because we require so much more to make us happy. Nippon has found the solution of material philosophy in a bowl of rice, and we must have beefsteak and mushrooms!"

"After all, isn't it a question of latitude?" Hallard asked absently.

Dean smiled; his shrewd, humorous eyes dwelt on his companion with a kindness that had not lost its divining power. "Of the inner man, I think," he replied dryly.

Hallard looked up, caught his eye and colored slightly. "See here, Dean," he said abruptly, "what do you know about this geisha business?"

"As little as may be," Dean answered promptly.

"Do you believe that creatures, like that old hag at the Garden of the Dragon and her husband, buy these girls from poor parents, and have really absolute power over them?"

The Reverend Dean thought a moment in silence. "As I understand it," he said at last, "these dancing-girls are sold under contract for a term of years. Sold usually by the wretchedly poor, and after that these people — yes, like Owannon and Saigo — have a right to their

services for the specified period. I believe the girls can't even own their clothes. In places like the Garden of the Dragon I don't believe they are ill treated; I'm afraid they like the atmosphere."

"It's an outrage!" Hallard remarked angrily.

"There are many things that outrage the higher conception of life," Dean replied quietly, "but Dai Nippon is not the only place where they exist. Unfortunately, there always seems to be a charming illusion about these little dancers, but, after all, they are symbolized by the Beckoning Kitten, 'Maneki-Neko,' and I'm afraid they often show their claws." He turned suddenly and laid his hand on Hallard's shoulder. "Jack, old fellow, don't be foolish; don't clothe even a little dancing-girl with imaginary qualities. You know it is said that she is followed by the God of Poverty, that the Fox-Women are her sisters, and you — well, you have a career to look forward to in England. In short, dear Jack, when you play ken with a geisha, and she makes the sign of the Fox, with her pretty hands, make the sign of the Gun which kills the Fox, for you are only the Man, and both the Fox and the Gun may be fatal to you."

"Nonsense, Dean; don't preach!"

"Dear Jack, it's my profession."

"Then it's the thing I like least about you."

"Prefer the office to the man, Jack! When

you say it's the thing you like least, I know I'm a failure. Poor preachers ought to be hung. If I can't talk sense to you without being a bore, I ought to retire to a Trappist Monastery."

"You're a jolly good fellow with a fishing-rod in your hand, Thompson, or even a cormorant!"

"Alas!" sighed the chaplain, "I once thought I was called to be a fisher of men!"

"You're all right when you don't meddle, old chap."

"If I understood my business, I'd have a divine intuition which would make meddling impossible. I'd simply become the other man's conscience."

"You evidently think I need one!"

"Dear boy, there are depths of illusive folly; there is a glamor, a mystery, a spell about the East, and it has fallen on you. You don't know what it is, but it's an obsession."

Hallard laughed. "In a way that's true, Dean; I felt it after I'd been in Tokyo only a few hours."

The chaplain nodded. "We all feel it at first, more or less. Shake it off, Jack, shake it off, as the plum tree shakes off its delicate blossoms. These groves are like the fairy films of a dream in spring, umenoki, or ume-no-hana, flower of plum."

Hallard turned quickly. "Flower of plum — is that what Umè means?"

Dean's whimsical smile deepened. "Seems to interest you," he remarked amusedly.

"Rather pretty, don't you think?" Jack retorted carelessly.

"Which?" the chaplain's humorous face broke into a broad smile; "which, Jack?"

"Don't be an ass, Thompson!"

Dean broke off a twig of the plum tree and began to whittle it as they walked.

There was a pause. In it they heard the old blue crane complaining again to the gods. They were emerging from the grove; before them the white curls of the mist floated; they could see beneath it the gay little junks on the bay.

"Jack, when are you going back to the Embassy? The Koshi-Sama hasn't the temper of an angel."

"I've got to go to-night, worse luck! Can't you come up and stay with me at Number Two?"

The chaplain reflected. He was uneasy about Hallard; the spell of the East was on him. Could he serve him by getting longer shore leave? Could he keep him out of mischief?

"De Freece is an excellent idiot. We'll make you comfortable, old chap," said Jack cheerfully.

"I'll come," Dean decided at last; "I'll go and wire to Yokohama. I'd promised to be there to-night. Coming with me?"

Hallard shook his head. "I'll stay here a bit and smoke; I like the glimpses of the water. You'll be back soon?"

"In an hour. Going to study plum trees?" Dean added teasingly.

Jack laughed. "On my soul, Dean, I haven't an object in the world this morning except to loaf — and to get back my equilibrium. Hang it all, don't laugh; I'm out of sorts, blue as the devil!"

"Theologically I should have called him red," said the chaplain mildly. "I'll try to make my hour short. Cheer up, Jack, we can't right the universe by tilting with windmills. Heaven knows, I've often wished I could!"

He waved his hand, disappearing, at last, on the path that led into the town, and Hallard experienced a feeling of relief. He knew the Reverend Dean was quite aware that he had carried a little straw sandal in his pocket, and that he had returned alone to the tea-house the night before. How much more the kindly, shrewd chaplain surmised he did not know. Yet, his errand there had been simple enough, he told himself; he merely wanted to solve the riddle of the little geisha girl. To try to reconcile his mind to the picture of Umè, pure and sweet and devout, launching the shōryōbune, with the light of the lotus lantern illuminating the scroll-like text of her robes, and this new Umè, the little butterfly with scarlet wings, who danced before the Japanese prince, Lord Kojiro, in a geisha tea-house; who sacrificed, doubtless, to the

Beckoning Kitten, who was a mystery, a myth, a mocking dream. Was it possible that the two were one? That the little flowerlike Umè was indeed two persons, or — quaint Japanese fancy — one body and many souls! Of course it was folly; as Dean said, it was madness to —

Then he saw her! Umè, lying at full length under the giant plum, her little chin in her pink palms, her cloudy gray kimono with its scroll of gold, like a glint of sunshine through mist, the soft pink fold about her throat, the pink lining to her long full sleeves! She was looking straight at him, shyly, but with a smile, her wonderful long eyes softly aglow, her face lit up, mischievous, childlike.

Hallard turned with an exclamation and ascended the little knoll beneath the giant tree.

“Umè San!” he said involuntarily.

She rose to her knees, bending her forehead three times to the earth. “Superiority, condescend to accept my good morning!” she said, looking meekly down.

“How in the world do I find you here and there and everywhere, O Umè San?” he asked. “Once you rose out of the sea, I dare swear it; once you were a scarlet butterfly with quivering wings; and once again you have sprung from the earth beneath your parent tree, Umè — the flower of plum.”

The naughty dimple came shyly in the rosy

oval of her down-bent cheek. "We call the 'elder brother of the hundred flowers,' umenoki, the honorable plum tree. Your Superiority has learned my name — Ume-no-hana, flower of plum."

"So little of it, and so poorly, that I shall need many lessons to make me letter perfect; you see I didn't know the whole, Ume-no-hana! Ah, I solve the riddle; you are the fairy of the lotus lantern; like Aladdin, you rub it and directly you are transported where you will. Ah, little Umè San, give me the lantern, and I will not return to Tokyo!"

She looked at him innocently, without comprehension of his fanciful address. She had drawn her knees up and clasped them, and she leaned her head back against the tree. "Do you not then wish to return to Tokyo?" she asked gently.

He sat down beside her on the knoll. A little way off the white beach rimmed the bay, and some boys were diving from a gaudy little junk that lay at anchor, its square sail flapping lazily in the warm breeze.

"Strange to relate, honorable Miss Flower of Plum," he said gayly, "I do not wish to return to Tokyo. Tokyo has curdled like sour cream. If I return, the Koshi Sama will put me in a dungeon and feed me on bread and water, or fasten me with a ball and chain inside the compound. Can't you

find a safe refuge for me; can't you rub the lotus lantern, Umè San? "

She had been looking down, and he had only caught the drooping outline of her delicate profile, but now she turned and raised her eyes. He was startled at their blue. There is a little roof-flower, the iris, that blossoms on the thatched roofs of Dai Nippon which is as blue as Umè's eyes.

"The lotus lantern was for the Bommatsuri," she explained sweetly. "It is the symbol of our Lord Buddha; it is honorably innocent and pure."

Hallard looked at her thoughtfully. "Then surely it is your lantern, Umè San."

She did not reply; she was watching him shyly. The dainty gayety of the little scarlet-winged geisha was gone; this was Umè of the sea, the little maid who had launched the shōryōbune.

Hallard's mood changed too. "Umè San," he said gravely, "will you tell me why you sang and danced for the Prince Kojiro? "

Umè drew her hands together tightly around her knees; one little bare foot thrust into a straw sandal, tied on with grass, slipped out from beneath the kimono folds. She had been wading, gay as a child, in the surf, and there was the sparkle of salt spray on her hair, and on the white throat where it showed above the folds of the robe that she had pulled up hastily to hide her pretty shoulders.

She did not answer Hallard.

"Do you like the great Prince Kojiro?" he persisted grimly, watching her.

She shook her head. "He wishes to pay for me to Owannon," she said simply, apparently without emotion.

"My God!" said Hallard, rudely shocked.

She looked up innocently. "He'll have to pay all thad I'm miserably worth to Owannon San," she explained, "but he is magnificently rich."

"You expect to be bought like a sheep? You know it?" Hallard gazed at her dumbfounded, his mind trying to grasp the phenomenon of her composure. "You don't resent being sold to this old blackguard?"

Umè looked at him again, and her blue eyes were calm. "I am a daughter of the samurai," she said; "I am miserably poor, lamentably helpless, Superiority, but the samurai girl can always find a way — to the gods."

Hallard leaned toward her on his elbow, studying her. She was so small, so delicate, so childish. "You mean —" he began, and stopped.

"The samurai wore two swords," she went on gently; "he never accepts an insult — never-r. Without death, so! If he cannot honorably kill, he has still the short sword. I may not be had for the taking — lig — thad, never-r! I am samurai."

Hallard was silent a long time, still studying her. He knew that she meant every word she

said, and the power of her young strong soul seemed to touch him suddenly, as it had touched him on the beach at Horiuchi, with a mystery, a power, a charm, that he could not define. Under his gaze a delicate flush mounted to her hair, but the oval of her face was calm, and she even smiled at him. She, who could walk with Death unmoved, had the smile of a child.

"Umè San," he said at last, and his voice sounded unnatural in his own ears, "is there no other way? Can you be released, bought off?"

She averted her face, and her eyes rested absently on the boys diving under the junk, but a wonderful light came into them. "There is a way, superiority. If — if any one wishes to free me — lig thad — to marry me, he may pay the price to Owannon and set me free."

There was a dead silence; Hallard's face changed sharply. His jest about the Koshi Sama and his ball and chain bit deep; it had a new significance. His dream, his infatuation, received its first great shock. She had clothed it in flesh before his eyes. He suddenly remembered that he was the military attaché of the British Embassy in Tokyo, that there were, besides, ties of honor, of faith, of tradition.

"Umè San," he said hoarsely, "your mother is dead; who sold you to Owannon?"

Umè gave him a timid look; the color had died out of her face, it seemed to have grown

small and childish. Her woman's heart, keen in its intuition, felt the change in him, divined the withdrawal.

"My honorable aunt is poor. All my childhood to pay for, to her is due. In four years I pay, then I am free. I pay them miserably well now; my voice can be endured a little, though it is ver' rude. The uguisu, you call it nightingale, it is my bird," she dimpled suddenly, — her moods were sunlight and shadow, — "the honorable plum tree bird."

Hallard was aware now that his sympathy for her, his entire belief in her innocence, were intrenching on the disappointment that had, at first, sorely smitten him. To find her a geisha had been bad enough; to know that she spoke of the buying and selling as some speak of their daily bread, had been a shock to his English prejudices; but to feel her apparent resignation to such a fate was the revealing climax. His mind had shuddered back from the contact of the idea of her, as the situation discovered her, a creature to be bought and sold, and not rebellious, bearing it with that dumb submission which he could understand the least.

But now the appealing childishness in her reached up to his pity, — her sweetness, her indescribable charm. She was a half-caste and poor, a little waif, doubtless, deserted by a European father. The curse of the seaport towns was

gathered up here and shaped in beautiful flesh. Poor little child of an untoward fate, delicate and fragile as her namesake, tossed like the scattered petals on the summer air, beautiful for the moment, then faded and lost — Ume-no-hana, flower of plum! Hallard clasped his hands behind his head.

“Umè,” he said gently, “will you sing for me? Once only — and for me?”

She turned from her study of the beach and regarded him; her white face was exquisitely delicate and wan. Their eyes met, and a faint color rose again to her forehead, as she stood up and made the formal Oriental salutation. With a graceful sweep of the hand she gathered up the folds of her kimono, slipped her little white feet out of their loose straw sandals, and began to dance, barefoot, on the moss. The sunlight made a pool of gold between them; Hallard saw her through its veil of beauty. She lifted her slender young arms above her head, clapping her hands softly. The full sleeves fluttered in the wind again, with the tremulous movement of delicate wings; her swift feet moved in and out, marking time to a weird measure, soundless, musicless, yet full of harmony, for her graceful perfect body swung and turned and wheeled with the very rhythm of music; her face grew luminous, her strange eyes glowed. Behind her the white beach flashed dazzlingly, the blue waves danced in

tune; before her the sunlight made its yellow pool.

Then she sang:

“ ‘Omae shindara tera ewa yaranu!
Yaete konishite saké de nomu.’ ”

She lifted her small chin, her white throat filled with the full sweet note. Her voice had that rare freshness, that piercing pathos that draws hot tears to the eyes. She danced still, swiftly, wildly, defying even the tears. Her flowered sleeves fluttered in the breeze, her little feet flashed in the sunlight, bathed in the yellow pool.

“ ‘Omae shindara tera ewa yaranu!’ ”

The geisha's song of love and death!

Suddenly, while she sang, a Japanese boy, about her own age and half naked, sparkling with the salt of the sea, leaped out of the shadows. He threw his arms around her and held her, looking fiercely at Hallard. His black brows lowered, and he bit his lip till it bled. He spoke to her in Japanese.

“ Sister, what do you here with the foreign barbarian? Return with me. Owannon, even Owannon, is better to be desired than the heathen with the yellow hair.”

Hallard had risen at the interruption and stood watching them. The boy challenged him with fierce eyes. But Umè's mood changed; she threw

her arms around her brother's bare wet shoulders and laughed softly, bewitchingly, wickedly.

"Thou art ver' wet, Masamitsu," she mocked in English, and then, to Hallard: "Forgive this miserable wretch. Condescend to be kind to my brother. This is Masamitsu, whom I greatly honor." As she spoke, she reached up one slender hand to the boy's cheek. "Ani San, this is my friend, lit' Umè's friend."

But Masamitsu lowered at Hallard unappeased.

Umè untwined her arms and loosed her obi, and the full folds of her kimono fell again about her lovely young limbs, as she stooped and put on her sandals.

"We return to Owannon. For the day only we — Masamitsu and I — come here; we were sent here alone lig this, so the great Prince Kojiro augustly desire to see lit' Umè. Together Masamitsu and I return. We see you no more again — Superiority!"

Hallard awoke sharply from his dream. "Umè — Umè San, you will stay?"

She shook her head, her hand in Masamitsu's. "Sayonara!" she mocked him, laughing softly.

They turned together, like two children, and ran pell-mell toward the beach.

"Umè!" Hallard shouted, "Umè San, witch, enchantress, wait!"

She turned and looked back, the dimple in her soft cheek, her fluttering sleeve half veiling the

naked boy's arm. Hallard followed, stumbling on the gnarled roots of the old plum trees.

They fled, graceful as the fabled sprites.

"Umè San!" Hallard shouted angrily, "you little witch, you —"

He stopped abruptly. He had turned out of the grove into a little lane and he almost fell into Dean's arms. The chaplain caught his elbows to steady himself, and they faced each other. Dean colored like a boy. "Jack!" he said, "if I'm a stumbling-block in the path of folly, I'm not without my uses!"

There was an awkward pause.

"Oh, hang it all!" said Hallard bluntly. "Why the devil —"

The chaplain took off his hat and dabbed his forehead with his handkerchief. "Don't you think we'd better start at once for Tokyo?" he suggested meekly. "It's — it's uncommonly warm."

VIII

IT seemed to Hallard that the getas had never clattered so loudly on the stone floor of the Shimbashi station. It was undoubtedly a detestable noise; it recalled him to earth, to Tokyo, to the Embassy, and to —

He turned very red; he had received a wire at Kanagawa too late to go down to Nagasaki to meet "the Veronica," and he was arriving at Tokyo, a delinquent, to make apologies, excuses, and all manner of insincere protestations. Suddenly he despised himself. Why, under heaven, had he drifted into an engagement with Maud Overton, simply because his father had wished it? In the revealing experience of the last few days, he began to be aware that he had never really wished it himself. Neither could he, in his heart, accuse Maud of having desired it. It seemed to have been managed for them. He had awakening recollections of Maud's dowager aunt and his father smoothing the way, his own lazy acquiescence in a parental project that did not jar upon his scheme of life, and Maud's girlish acceptance of fate, in the shape of an old play-fellow. How much did she care? He was abruptly

conscious that he had never known! Was it because he had never cared?

He was ashamed of his sudden resentment against Maud. She was a thoroughly nice girl, and it was certainly as much his fault as hers, and the engagement was an accomplished fact. It was sensible, it was appropriate, it was even desirable, in spite of Colonel Overton's peculiarities. Jack smiled a little to himself. If the Pater had known as much as he knew now about the colonel's financial plunging, he fancied that the old gentleman would have dropped the negotiations. But none of these things altered the fact that Maud had always been a thoroughly good sort, a good friend, a good comrade, a very unexacting sweetheart. Certainly, he reflected, as he signaled for a jinrikisha, Maud had let the reins go easily. If she had given little, she had asked less. It had not been revealed to him that, perhaps, Maud's intuition had saved her from giving more than she was likely to receive. After all, he was astonished to find how small a space she had occupied on the horizon of his life. He had never turned to her, at any moment, for sympathy or interest; there had been no feeling of companionship. She was a fixed fact in the future, and he had rather dreaded hastening that future. At least, he knew now that he had dreaded it. He was suddenly aware of a new and absorbing interest. The male creature is very slow,

and it takes him a long time to discover himself; he was not aware even yet that it was Umè San who had discovered him!

He had a bewildering recollection of the lovely grove with its pools of sunshine, its white-rimmed bay, and the lithe, beautiful dancer, the swift-flying, little bare feet on the moss, the fluttering, flowered sleeves, the face that had a child's innocence and a woman's subtle charm, the wildly lovely dance under the "elder brother of the hundred flowers," the sweetness of the soft voice, singing the geisha's song of love and death as blithely as the bird that she claimed as her own, — the little uguisu, the Japanese nightingale.

Bewildering little creature! Whether she trailed her scarlet sleeves over her little drum, or rose in the moonlight from the sea, she was the incarnation of the East, its magic and its spell. Try as he might to forget her, she haunted him, sometimes pathetic, her eyes cast down, her small face colorless, and again with the dimple in her cheek, the shy eyes laughing, with the elusive flash of humor, of childlike joy and inconsequence.

Hallard lay back in the corner of the kuruma and thought, — not of the Embassy and the Ambassador, nor of Maud Overton and the tangled skein of life, — but of little Umè San, sold to Owannon in the Garden of the Dragon. The thing was monstrous!

Low, sweeping pine branches dipped in the white waters of the moat; wild fowl flew low over it, unmolested, sportive, under the protection of the Son of Heaven. On its wooded height the Temple of Sannō, with its bibbed monkeys, brooded over the still, hot scene. Here was a hedge of close-clipped mochi, there a wonderful stone lantern. It all passed as if in a dream. Persistently returned the vision of the "elder brother of the hundred flowers" and the pools of yellow sunshine in the grove at Omori. But he did not hear her voice; instead he heard, abruptly, the blind amma piping upon his reeds. He recalled the night at the Embassy when Inouyé had been there on his mysterious errand; he had heard the blind amma then.

He bent forward and looked out. They were ascending the Kudan Hill, near the compound. Already he could see the flag flying from Haman's Gallows, as the irreverent named the flagstaff on the mound; and almost at the gate was the pathetic figure of the blind amma. He was an old man, wearing the blue cotton hara-gake of the peasant, and playing plaintively upon his reeds. A little boy stood beside him, patiently waiting to lead him, looking up with bright oblique eyes which had to see for two.

The child saw Hallard and his lips moved; plainly he announced the approach of a foreign barbarian. Something in his face caught Jack's

attention; he stopped his kurumaya and got out, calling the boy to him. The strange pair came together, the blind amma smiling the dumb pathetic smile of those who do not see.

"Ask your master if he knows Inouyé, the deformed kurumaya?" Hallard said.

The child turned to his master and spoke in Japanese.

"The barbarian asks if you know the deformed kurumaya, Inouyé?"

"Lord of Hell, what will the barbarian do? Enough of evil have the barbarians already done! Tell him that Inouyé is in the Meido. Tell him anything! There is a trap in this."

The boy turned blandly. "My poor master, Yumoto Toba, says thad he is lamentably old, miserably blind, lig a — whad you call eet? — stone? He does not know Inouyé when he see him."

"You're a delightful little liar," said Hallard; "there's seventy-five sen."

The boy took it without a sound, his eyes opening with amazement. The money did not even clink, but the blind amma suddenly and deftly seized the little hand, undid the fingers, and slipped the money into his own blue bag. The boy whimpered.

Hallard laughed. "So!" he said to himself, "Yumoto, the blind amma, understands English, and he was playing outside the compound to

Inouyé. After all, there are more things in heaven and earth than I supposed. Ah, little Umé, little Miss Flower of Plum, what mystery hangs about you? Why do these old rats watch you? It's a pity that the strange gods you invoke do not devour them!"

He stood in the gateway watching the strange pair. The blind amma waited an instant and then went on, piping upon his reeds, uttering his low cry:

" Amma-kamishimo-go-hyakmon! "

The boy, meanwhile, was trying to thrust his hand into the bag to recover his property, but, every time, the amma felt his light touch and slapped him, and the boy lurched away with a howl.

Hallard lingered, conscious of delaying the inevitable even with a bare pretext; then he heard his name called.

Colonel Overton and De Freece were just inside the gate, and beyond them was a tall, trim, womanly figure in fresh white. Hallard swung around with a feeling of embarrassment so novel that he could not reconcile himself to it. He turned red.

" Your engagements at Kanagawa must have been pressing," remarked the Ambassador ironically. " I had to send De Freece down to Nagasaki."

Of course Hallard made it worse by trying to

apologize. He stumbled into an explanation that involved the Reverend Thompson Dean.

Overton snapped him up. "Dean came up by the first train this morning," he said bluntly.

"We missed each other at the tea-house," Hallard began, and was suddenly aware of Miss Overton's outstretched hand.

She had come quietly across the lawn and was smiling at him; the level kindness of her clear blue eyes was like a reassurance. She did not even look reproaches.

"You don't know how good it is to be back at Number One," she said gayly; "I felt lonely without the compound. All the children were out to meet me, and Cook San has made me a cake, a really and truly European cake, he says, for the o jo san! If you're all good, you may have some — I'm going to have tea on the lawn this minute, only I refuse utterly to serve it on my knees!"

Her light tone brought Hallard such intense relief that he was proportionately grateful. How fresh and wholesome she looked with her pink and white complexion and her clear eyes. She was not pretty but she was decidedly a personality; and there was something good to look at in her frank smile, her wide brow, and straight short nose, and the reddish tendrils here and there in her smooth brown hair. What a cad he had been to forget about Nagasaki!

However, Maud did not flatter him by showing resentment; she was as serene as a spring morning, as she got them all about the little basket tea-table that Unke had produced, and Hallard noticed, with a twinge, that it was precisely on the spot where he had stood listening to the geisha's little drum.

Maud did not know that he had associations, but in some way, quite naturally and easily, she seemed to bring De Freece to her side. He helped her with the tea-caddy and was absurdly occupied with the details of cups and spoons. Hallard watched him ill-humoredly; the big fellow was so abnormally pleased to pass cups of tea, while apparently Maud Overton, instead of being disturbed because her fiancé had failed to meet her, even at the Shimbashi station, was quite happy and at peace with the world. It was only the Ambassador who scowled. It was plain that he could not forgive Hallard. Maud had made him a cup of tea, and he absorbed it slowly, frowning into it as if he saw some hideous diplomatic problem just under his nose, so near that he regarded it cross-eyed. Hallard was sheepishly aware that his Chief had unpleasantly fat cheeks and prominent creases around his neck. Not even the fondest imagination could have called the Overton creases the necklace of Venus; they were rather the sign of Circe's wand.

Maud turned suddenly to Hallard, her laughing

eyes challenging him. "I'm going to make you cut the cake for o jo san, the honorable young lady of the house!" she said.

"How in the world shall I begin?" he asked, taking up her mood. "It looks like Fuji-no-yama."

"It's charming," she laughed; "a three-story pagoda with a double roof and painted shoji, all for me! Look at my flying crane and my honorable pine trees. Unke's littlest son toddled in ahead of the triumphal procession; he was told to 'o-jigu,' and promptly rubbed his little nose on my mat. Then O Tora stood up and chanted; I suppose she told me I was honorably welcome to ichiban! Anyway, I accepted the cake and gave a frosted goddess to little Tomi. Then we got him up and stood him on his fat little legs again."

"He's so fat he usually keeps on rolling like a ball," said De Freece, "and bumping his little shaved head on the floor."

"I wonder how our heads would feel, shaved and rubbed on the door-mat?" Maud suggested frivolously; she had been guiding Hallard's brutal efforts to cut her cake.

"Some of us ought to know, so as to be properly penitential," he said contritely, beginning to feel intensely shabby under her smiling kindness.

She gave him a quick, keen look; one might

have said that there was almost a wistful hope, a longing, in the glance, but it passed. She closed her little tea-caddy with her firm white hand, a hand that seemed so large in comparison with the remembered miniature of Umè's; then she turned with an arch look to Hallard.

"O-jigu!" she said wickedly.

He reddened. "Metaphorically or actually?" he asked.

She considered; her father was lecturing De Freece about the Japanese secretary, and for the moment she could speak to Hallard alone. She looked up with a provoking smile.

"Inquire of your honorable conscience," she said, at last.

"Oh, I know I'm in disgrace," he said meekly. "The Koshi Sama has me on his black books."

She glanced at her father's lowering profile and a fleeting shadow passed over her own frank face. "Then I can't put you on mine," she said lightly; "the Pater is enough for two! Please do penance instead; go out to-morrow and find me a lotus lantern. I saw a beauty in Yokohama; let me see, it was on the Street of Aged Men. Such a lovely name, isn't it? Go out, delinquent, and find me a lotus lantern."

Hallard's face changed surprisingly, and he set his untasted cup of tea on the table. "Ah, really? But don't you know they — I mean the lotus lanterns — are used for the dead?"

Maud Overton was watching him and her blue eyes laughed. "Jack — did she carry a lotus lantern?"

He reddened again and laughed a little, too. "What nonsense are you talking, Maud?"

She leaned forward. "Mr. de Freece, will you find me a lotus lantern, a beautiful white lotus lantern?"

De Freece gave her a slightly puzzled look, adjusting his monocle. "Fifty, if you want them, Miss Overton," he said gallantly.

She laughed softly. "Behold the difference!" she remarked. Then to him: "Thank you, I want just one, and I want that very much. Mr. Hallard can't imagine why."

"Neither can I," said Overton bluntly. "You can get a string of lanterns any time, and hang them all over the Embassy."

"Would you let me?" Maud doubted. "I'd like a lot strung from tree to tree. They're so pretty lit up! I'm going to send two hundred to Aunt Matilda."

"I wouldn't be surprised to see Matilda with one on the top of her head!" retorted the Ambassador dryly.

"She's a shining light without that, father," Maud laughed teasingly.

Overton growled. He was deeply chagrined. Hallard's failure to get his wire and his neglect to meet Maud at Nagasaki galled the Ambassador.

Yet, it was obviously bad taste to make too much of it. Of course it was Maud's business. That was where the shoe pinched; the colonel knew that the young lady's spirit was anything but humble, and if she deliberately chose to quarrel with her careless fiancé, could he prevent it? His heavy jaws set themselves squarely and his scowl grew black. There should be no quarrel that would break the engagement, on that he was resolved; the bird might flutter angrily in the net, but she should not break through! Then he looked up to find Unke at his elbow. The Japanese whispered, bowing profoundly, smiling placidly. The Ambassador's darkened face grew slightly pale, as he rose and set his cup down.

"A visitor, father?" Maud asked pleasantly.

"No one you'll care to see," he retorted grimly, and walked heavily away.

Hallard's glance followed him involuntarily, and his start caught Maud's quick eye. She turned her head. In the foliage at the far-off end of the compound they both saw the singularly unpleasant bronze-like face of Inouyé, the deformed runner.

"Heavens!" said she, "is that a native deity? I've heard of Emma-Ō, the Lord of Death!"

"Looks like one of the Ni-Ō," corrected Hallard quietly.

De Freece had risen. "I ordered that man out

of the Chancery last week," he said, in annoyance. "Where is Unke?"

Maud waved her hand lightly. "Yonder," she replied, with her graceful composure; "he just conjured up the vision."

De Freece started across the lawn. The colonel and the kurumaya were no longer visible; the soft green foliage had engulfed them. Unke bowed low and smilingly before the indignant secretary.

Alone, for the first time, with Hallard, Maud betrayed an instant's nervousness; she began to arrange her tea things with elaborate care.

His conscience twinged; how could he play the lover after all? "Maud," he said, with an effort, "you haven't told me that I'm forgiven."

She looked up, her pleasant, kind, blue eyes meeting his a little, just a little wistfully, and a slight flush crept up to her hair. "Do you really want to be?" she asked simply.

"You've been more than kind —" he began.

Then she laughed. "Let it go at that, Jack!"

"But — I say, Maud, it was beastly shabby; I didn't get your father's wire, I —"

"Didn't you?" she interrupted lightly. "It was lucky that Mr. de Freece did. My maid and I were swamped at Nagasaki with our boxes, and only strangers were there. I've never learned to pronounce any Japanese right except 'sayonara,'

I should have had to keep on saying it and bowing! I assure you, he looked like an angel."

"Old De Freece!" Hallard exclaimed, exasperated, "that great lanky fellow with a monocle!"

She looked up at De Freece, approaching them again, and her blue eyes were very kind. "Is he lanky?" she doubted; "I assure you I only looked for his wings! I came near throwing my arms around his neck."

"I thought that was reserved for me."

"We'll cut it out," she said coolly; "as a fiancé I'll give you a recess!" She added, laughing: "De Freece was simply an angel."

"Nonsense!"

She smiled. "My dear Jack, you forget that he met me at Nagasaki."

"Maud —" he began.

"And you didn't!" she finished gayly.

"I see you don't mean to forgive me!"

She gave him an inscrutable glance; she meant to answer — what he could not divine — but, at that moment, De Freece came up, still grumbling against Unke.

Hallard leaned back in his chair, half pleased, half annoyed. She had helped him out, she had been kind, yet it stung him a little to see how lightly she could handle it. After all, did he count with her at all? He was not altogether pleased; it shocked his egotism, his masculine belief in

himself. If he must marry her, did he want her to be so easily indifferent? Did he —

Then he heard the blind amma piping again upon his reeds.

IX

IT was noon; the priests in the temple tapped with muffled mallets on the lacquered dolphin intoning the Sutra of the Lotus of the Good Law. The less devout kurumaya ate his rice with the honorable chop-sticks, the yellow junks floated idly in Yedo Bay, and the golden air seemed to tremble in the brilliant glory over the crest of Fuji.

Owannon, in the Garden of the Dragon, stood leaning on her bamboo staff, listening intently, eagerly, almost hungrily, to the straggling utterances of a solitary guest. He was old, he was plainly and darkly robed, but there was the dignity, the passionate pride of the samurai in his attitude. He flung out one hand with the gesture of a man who draws a sword, but his long thin fingers only closed on the glossy leaves of the Japanese laurel. He snapped the twig and cast it away.

"See!" he exclaimed bitterly, "even the shrubbery mocks me. I throw out a hand and snatch the yuzuri-ha, the symbol of good fortune, the hope that the father may live until his son honorably succeeds him, and I — I who had but

a daughter, I, Nishida Enryō, must miserably behold her lost! I am a Japanese; how am I to bear this dishonor?"

"The great lord, Prince Kojiro, accuses her," said Owannon, with cool cruelty. "He says that she, your miserable daughter, O Takè, is false."

"Demons of the deepest hell confound him!" replied Nishida. "O Takè is true to the monster; she is the mother of his child. I am samurai; were she false — as the gods live — I would slay her with these hands!"

"The great lord has divorced her," retorted Owannon, and smiled her slow, cruel smile. "He has told her that she is divorced."

Nishida smiled too, the mockery of a smile, but the drops of perspiration stood out on his bronzed face. "May the Lord of Hell reward him!" he said, in a low voice.

Owannon lowered her head, snakelike, watching him. "You may avenge the insult," she said.

The old Japanese shivered. "The fiend once, in my need, did me a favor," he said, and he seemed to drag out the words; "I cannot slay him."

Owannon's smile was one of relief. "But you have time yet for the short sword," she suggested sweetly.

He looked at her scornfully. "Woman, I have a daughter."

"She is disgraced."

"As the gods live, she is innocent!"

Owannon laughed.

It was a mistake. Nishida sprang at her and grasped her by the throat. He thrust his livid face close to hers. "Sodzu Baba!" he screamed. "May you suffer in eight hundred reincarnations!"

He shook her. Owannon tried to scream but it gurgled in her throat; her eyes bulged, her face darkened; she struggled in vain, helpless in the hands of the terrible old man whom she had insulted. He thrust her back past the yuzuri-ha, and dragged her toward the rippling yama-buki, all the fury of an outraged and insulted man gathered into the outburst. He loathed her, his fingers were like iron on her throat, he meant to kill her.

Owannon tried to shriek again. Her face was purple, she fell forward on her assailant, and the lacquer table went down with a crash. The world grew dark about her. Suddenly some one shouted. There was a rush, the mad fingers were torn from her throat, while Nishida was flung down.

Owannon, in a heap on the ground, looked up through what seemed, at first, a mist of blood. Then it cleared to a purple haze, and in it stood the great prince, Kojiro, surrounded, as she thought, by rainbows. He was looking at the fallen Nishida, held, now, between two of his attendants.

"Bind his arms behind him, Yokogi," he commanded briefly; "Nishida Enryō is mad."

Nishida, dragged to his knees, glared fiercely at his daimyō son-in-law. "Your hour is yet to come; demons of the deepest hell await you!"

Kojiro laughed.

His two attendants bound the old samurai's arms with cruel energy. Then they fastened his ankles. Nishida uttered no protest, though the pain brought the perspiration out in beads on his face.

Kojiro waved his hand. "Swiftly remove this carrion."

They picked the samurai up, like a sack of salt, and bore him down the long path to the gate. He neither struggled nor spoke, but once he smiled.

Kojiro watched him go, feet first, like a corpse. The golden sunlight bathed the stately figure of the prince, rippled over the golden chrysanthemums on his dark robes, and touched his sash and the hilt of a small dagger that he wore only half concealed. He stood with his delicate womanish hands clasped under his sleeves; his face was as smooth and pale as ivory, his eyes full of smouldering fire, his cruel lips smiled. His dark figure, bathed in sunshine, and gleaming here and there with a gold chrysanthemum, seemed to soak up the light and remain dark, powerful, threatening. He watched his vassal go, bound

hand and foot, then he turned slowly and contemptuously and looked at Owannon, crumpled in a heap in the yama-buki, and his lip curled.

"So" he said biting, "you, you miserable scum, discuss the divorce of Kojiro Hirata! What is it to you?"

Owannon cringed, prostrating herself. "Will the great Lord have patience with his servant?" she whimpered.

He looked his scorn. "Where is Umè San?" he demanded.

Owannon continued to whimper. Nishida's fingers had left their marks on her throat. She strangled and did not answer; she was trying to think. Kojiro sat down on a low seat under the plum tree and leaned forward, his elbows on his knees, watching her.

"How does it feel to be choked?" he asked coolly.

Again Owannon prostrated herself; the dreadful old woman was afraid of him, cruelly afraid of him.

"It hurts?" he inquired sweetly, dropping his chin into the smooth hollow of his hand.

"It is like dying, Lord," Owannon wailed.

"So!" he smiled; "you then greatly desire to try it — again?"

Owannon's eyes seemed to sink back in her head. "Never, never, great Prince!"

"Indeed?" he laughed pleasantly, leaning for-

ward; "then listen, Owannon San. If you produce not Ume-no-hana instantly, then —" he snapped his fingers — "Yokogi can strangle with one hand; he is honorably skilful."

"Kwannon have mercy!" Owannon cried, struggling to her knees; "the great Lord commands my life! I hear and obey!" She rose unsteadily, clutching at her bamboo staff. "I go to bring Umè San."

Kojiro laughed softly, his chin still in the hollow of his hand. He watched the old woman hobble down the path and across the little rustic bridge, over the pond where the lotus flowers floated. The still water of the pool was brown and on it the great pink and white blooms drowsed; behind it the yama-buki rippled yellow against the close dark hedge of mochi. It was still and radiantly hot. A little musumë dropped to her knees beside the prince and offered tea. He waved her away.

"Saké," he said.

His attendants had fallen back behind the nearest tea-house and were lying on the grass, silent and watchful. Kojiro did not move; chin in hand, he stared after Owannon. He watched her gaunt old figure, in its rich robes, as it disappeared in the distance, and then his eyes, bright with that lambent fire that burns in the darkest eyes in the world, fixed themselves on space.

He was an Oriental, and he had all an Oriental's

fierce passions, with a feline gentleness which masked them to the world. A great many thoughts were passing in his mind. He was a daimyō and he was a reactionist; he hated the existing order of things, which admitted the foreigner within his gates. He ruled within his own territory as absolutely as his fathers had ruled before him. Human life he valued lightly, and not at all when it crossed his purposes. Two years before he had married O Takè, the daughter of one of his own samurai, Nishida Enryō, and two months ago he had divorced her with a word, a nod. In his own domain his nod was as definite as Olympian Jove's. He was a man of immense wealth and large power, and in the habit of gratifying his own lightest wish; he had the means to do it, and now, quite unexpectedly, a very strong desire was thwarted. Three times he had tried to buy the little geisha girl, Umè San, and three times Owannon and Saigo had evaded the sale. Yet he knew them to be, beyond measure, avaricious.

Leaning forward in his crouching attitude, his chin in the hollow of his hand, Kojiro cogitated. He meant to have little Umè; of that there was no doubt; but he desired also to punish Owannon and Saigo for the undesirable delay. There was no power in the world that could save Umè San; the great Prince Kojiro desired her, therefore the thing was done! Looking out across the still

brown pool where the white lotus floated, he smiled. Very surely Umè San was his.

The little children of Nippon have a game called "Oni-gokko," the Game of the Devil, and such men as the Prince Kojiro play always a game called "Oni-gokko," the Game of the Devil, but not as the children play it!

He turned suddenly and summoned Yokogi to bring his purse. The servant brought it and saluted, prostrating himself. Kojiro took the purse and counted out some money and laid it on the little lacquer table; immediately it was reflected fathoms deep, and the doubled price of a little geisha girl was thus trebled and quadrupled in the polished depths.

All the while the pure white lotus floated unspotted above its bed of slime in the brown pool; the symbol of an unspotted life, the flower of Buddha.

Kojiro continued to watch the long slender path between the plum trees and the wistaria, which seemed to narrow to an unseen apex, green and beautiful. Long ago the soft tapping of the mallets had ceased in the temple; the coolies were chanting the toil-song as they loaded a yellow junk at the wharf; shadows were falling on the east side of the yuzuri-ha.

The waiting prince did not lose his temper, his placid face showed no sign of anger, but his long eyes burned.

Presently, he saw not Owannon, but Saigo, coming up the path, and Saigo came alone. Kojiro stretched out a slender, delicate hand and lifted the saké cup to his lips. He drained it and looked into the bottom of it. A dragon was coiled in the cup, a wonderful red dragon with golden scales. Kojiro's upper lip twitched slightly. He put down the cup and, resting his chin again in the hollow of his hand, he waited for Saigo.

The old Japanese came slowly; though he affected haste, his feet dragged, and his bald head shone curiously white in the sun. He wore the native dress, somewhat less rich than Owannon's, and dark in color; he had kilted the long kimono up into his belt, and his bowed legs, encased in light green satin leggings, made him uncommonly like a frog. In the stillness the *shu-shu* of his sandals awoke an echo. He crossed the little bridge and came on. Three yards from Kojiro he prostrated himself and pressed his forehead to the earth.

The prince regarded him in silence. His long, glowing eyes seemed to bore into Saigo's consciousness. The old man rubbed his head in the dirt.

"Can I serve your Augustness?"

"Produce Umè San."

Saigo groaned, prostrating himself again.

Kojiro waited; that slight quiver of his upper lip showed one long tooth like a fang. At his

feet hopped a fat toad which had come out of the yuzuri-ha. It hopped toward him and stopped, squatting, its monstrous brown back full of yellow warts.

"Are you deaf?" Kojiro asked pleasantly. "I commanded Umè San."

Saigo advanced half a yard on his knees and bobbed down again. Like Owannon, he choked and sneezed, but no words came; like her, he tried to think. This was the game of "Oni-gokko," and the move was his.

Kojiro watched him, his eyes narrowing, then suddenly he stooped and, picking up the great toad by the hind leg, flung it deftly, with certain aim, on Saigo's bald head. It landed with a thud and spread itself, clutching for safety. Saigo shrieked and rose to his knees, battling with his enemy, who slid down the back of his neck. The Japanese leaped up now, tearing at his robes while the toad slid.

The prince laid back and laughed. "So!" he said mockingly, "you have a tongue!"

Poor Saigo, between the devil and the deep sea, danced, while the toad, dropping from his robe, at last, made off. Then he stood panting, his eyes glittering with venom, while he bent them meekly to the earth, for Kojiro was powerful.

The prince struck the lacquer table with his forefinger.

"Bring hither Umè San!" he commanded;

"here is the price. I desire to buy this dancing-girl, for my palace at Tokyo."

Saigo pretended distress. "Augustness, as the gods live, I cannot sell the dancing-girl, Ume-no-hana, except only to one who marries her."

Kojiro thought. "Wherefore?" he asked keenly, his eyes burning into Saigo.

"I am forbidden by a great one. Great Augustness desires her to marry. Great the price he demands. If I obey not, he takes her from this miserable tea-house, and I see her no more, I see no more the money that I paid for her services. Saigo is poor."

"His name?"

Saigo glanced over his shoulder. "Is greatly to be feared," he said; "I dare not so much as whisper. Augustness, condescend to forgive."

"He will take her away, this little dancing-girl, if she is not married?"

"He will take her away. Over seas, a long way. Blue her eyes are, Lord; she is not of our people; her own people call her, it is in her blood. Only will she stay if she is married in Nippon. Augustly let her go, Lord."

"I will marry her," said Kojiro.

Saigo, taken by surprise, fairly gaped.

Kojiro struck the table now with his fist. "Are you deaf, fool?" he demanded. "Bring hither Umè San."

The blow on the table had made the money

dance, and Saigo looked at it greedily, wetting his lips with his purple tongue.

"If your Augustness will pay three times that," he said, in a low voice, "and pay it here; there is Inouyé—a dark night and a good runner! Lord, no one need ask where the miserable girl goes, so only she returns here no more."

Kojiro looked at him keenly. "So? Where then is the Augustness who, a minute ago, willed her to marry?"

Saigo prostrated himself. "Great Lord, I fear; only money, great money, will pay."

"And if I pay when I come again?"

"Augustness takes in his hand my miserable life! Yet the girl shall go with Inouyé; she will dance in your palace."

Kojiro made an impatient movement; he thought he recognized a familiar scheme to increase the value of a geisha. "Where is the girl, honorable devil-fish?"

Saigo sidled away, his eyes on his enemy, the honorable toad-san. At the bridge he stopped and clapped his hands three times.

In the tense hot stillness the echo caught it and trebled it yet again. The air swam with little golden motes of sunshine; in the distant rice paddies the coolies chanted.

Again Saigo clapped his hands.

X

FOR the third time Saigo clapped his hands. Then, as if summoned from the earth, Umè San appeared. Her robe was covered with embroidery, through which the scarlet flowers glowed, misted with gold; her obi-dome was jeweled, jewels flashed in her hair, but her face looked pale and small. Its beauty was as delicate as its charm was subtle. Her gorgeous dress added nothing; it seemed rather to weigh upon a creature so flower-like and exquisite and slender. Only her great sleeves were always graceful, their wavering, fluttering lengths seeming to expand and fold with her mood, tremulous as a butterfly's. Like Saigo, she came within a few yards of the prince and then prostrated herself. Behind her the old Japanese cringed, his smooth face, with its drumhead skin, betraying nothing.

Kojiro glanced at him and waved his hand.

"Go!" he commanded.

Saigo went.

The garden was almost deserted. Kojiro's servants lay behind the tea-house, talking together in low voices, so low that it was but a

murmur that mingled with the soft sounds of re-awakened life. The prince, happily for them, heard nothing. Instead, he looked at Umè San. She had risen and stood waiting. There was no vivacity in her expression, her pale face was cold. Unfortunately for her, there was a charm even in her drooping attitude. Kojiro saw it.

"Umè," he said, "I sent for you to tell you to make honorably ready. On Thursday I intend to marry you."

She started and looked up; her wonderful long eyes were intensely blue. Unconsciously she strained her little drum against her heart.

"Forget me, Lord," she said, in a low voice; "little Umè is too lamentably poor."

Her answer pleased him. He leaned forward again, in his favorite attitude, his chin in his hand. "You please me, Umè; I pay Saigo and Owanon augustly well and set you free. In four days I will marry you. See, then, the great honor conferred upon you."

Umè did not move; she was white as driven snow. She looked at him intently, seeking some mercy in his smooth, cruel face. She found none.

"Let me go, great Lord," she pleaded winningly. "I am so humble; there are others honorable, beautiful and noble. I am not beautiful, I am but poor and ugly. Let Umè go!"

Kojiro smiled. "Am I not doing well to marry Ume-no-hana?" he asked blandly. "I,

who could take you from these people now for the asking? ”

Umè's face changed; there was a power and a glory in her look; her young soul suddenly ascended to greater heights, and she felt its freedom. Neither Owannon nor Kojiro could prevail against it; immortal, it partook of the glory of the Immortals.

“ You could not,” she said simply; “ the gods live.”

Something in her look arrested his attention; Kojiro was a connoisseur in the looks of women. He regarded her keenly; her face was pure and luminous as the white lotus lantern that had burned at her feet in the Festival of the Bon; there was an uplift, a spiritual daring, — truly she might have been a daughter of the gods.

“ Umè, you do not then desire to marry me? ”

“ No! ” she said sharply, and shuddered.

He was amazed. The prince, at whose nod the servile cringed, who could have had the daughter of the greatest noble for the asking, was flouted by a geisha girl, a little half-caste, the child of misfortune. For the moment it amused him.

“ And why? ” he demanded curiously.

She made no answer; her brain whirled. Her little drum had slipped from her hands and lay at her feet. To most Japanese girls nothing could have been more simple than a made marriage; it was their fate, and Prince Kojiro condescended

greatly to the geisha girl. Umè knew it, but she recoiled instinctively from him; he was handsome, rich, powerful, but he filled her young soul with loathing. To her he was more repulsive than Saigo's toad. Yet Umè knew that there was small chance of escape except by one road. She did not fear it, for she was samurai, but she was young and the desire of life is sweet. Suddenly, too, she saw the sands of Horiuchi and the foreign barbarian. Through the awful pause she seemed to hear his voice; it had been kind, so were his eyes. Life, that had seemed so bright, was suddenly narrowed to the one way, the way of the samurai.

"And why, Umè?" Kojiro asked again ironically.

She knelt; her lovely face, lifted imploringly, had a fatal effect on the prince; though she knew it not, it sealed her doom in his mind. His passion for her was already making him do strange things, things out of keeping with his rank and his traditions; it leaped now to its culmination, his dark face glowed duskily, as though a fire shone through bronze. Umè's scarlet sleeves fell back from her lifted hands, her slender wrists, her delicate round arms.

"Great Lord, let me go," she implored; "let me go in peace."

"Never, Umè."

"There are others more beautiful, more gentle;

I am miserably rude and poor and mean. You would be ashamed of me! Great Lord, let me be!"

"Never, Umè."

"Great Prince, the little wayside flower may look well in the spring grass and sunshine, but gathered and put in your august palace it would be mean and miserable and faded. Umè is but a wayside flower; let her be in the humble grass, Lord!"

"Never, Ume."

She rose, white as a wraith. She unclasped the jeweled chain from her throat and cast it on the ground; she took the flowers from her hair, the bracelets from her arms and flung them all away. Her long hair fell in a cloud about her shoulders. "I am but a slave," she said mournfully; "why will they decorate a slave? But, though they buy me and sell me for a price, though you pay it, great Prince, my soul you cannot have! Kwannon will have mercy on me and deliver me from your hands."

"I will marry you in four days," said Kojiro, smiling, outwardly unmoved, inwardly raging. "In four days you will do my will, Umè-ko."

She looked at him, a changed being. She was no longer the little geisha girl, the orphan half-caste; some strange transition had passed over her spirit. Her young soul triumphed over the fears of the flesh.

"Never, Lord," she said, with a conviction that glowed deep in her long eyes.

He thought her mad. Then he humored her. "I am rich, Umè-ko," he said smoothly; "I am powerful, I can give you much. Why do you fear me?"

She met his look superbly. "I do not fear you, Lord."

He rose and put aside the lacquer table, that had reflected the price of a geisha girl, and came close to her. "Then why do you not desire to marry a prince, Sakura Umè-ko?" he asked.

Face to face they stood a moment, the girl looking at him, fascinated, as it seemed, by his cruel eyes. Then she drew back with a little cry. "Oh," she shuddered, "I—I hate you!" It was involuntary, and she writhed away from him in passionate revulsion.

His anger leaped its smooth control; he caught her rudely by the arm and shook her. "Enough of this! You'll come with me now, little other-than-expected creature! I've paid the price and, as the gods live, I mean to have you!"

With a sudden swift movement she dragged his dagger from its sheath. The unexpected flash of steel startled him; he loosened his hold and she slipped out of his hands and sprang away. She was quivering from head to foot, but she held the weapon fiercely; her fighting blood was up,



Face to face they stood a moment. *Page 126.*

her eyes sparkled, she backed against the yu-zuri-ha.

He stood staring at her, astonished. "You can but sting, little buyu!" he mocked at last. "Would you murder me?"

Her white face quivered, her breast heaved. "Do not come near me!" she warned him; "do not tempt me!"

"Lord of Hell!" cried Kojiro, "do you think I can't break you to my will? I'd have you now if fifty thousand demons intervened!" and he came on.

Umè stood still; without a word she lifted the short, cruel weapon and placed the point against her heart, its quivering light flashing on her scarlet robes. "Kwannon have mercy!" she breathed, her hand tightening resolutely on the jeweled hilt.

Kojiro halted. "Stop!" he shouted. "I will not touch you; put down my dagger."

Umè smiled; color glowed in her kindled face. "No," she said, "you have taught me the way; one step nearer, Lord, and I die."

Kojiro strummed on the lacquered table with fingers that shook with rage; he laughed bitterly.

"A pretty jest, Umè San!"

"A samurai can always die."

"I did but jest."

"The sword is more kind than you, Lord."

He watched her, his eyes narrowing. The girl's

white face was luminous; the dagger flashed, the young breeze slightly fluttered her long scarlet flowered robe. Then her expression changed, and a sudden joy flashed in her eyes, as she saw a young Japanese coming up the path from the gate. Seeing her, he ran toward them, and her heart leaped.

"Masamitsu!" she cried joyfully, off her guard.

In an instant Kojiro had her by the wrist and dragged the dagger from her hand. Umè screamed, and her brother, blind to the consequences, leaped on Kojiro. The two men closed. There was a short sharp struggle.

"Let Umè go!" the boy shouted; "let my sister go!"

Kojiro swung away and struck the unarmed boy full on the forehead with the sharp hilt of his dagger. The blow was fearful. Masamitsu fell like lead, his head at Umè's feet.

She sank on her knees and threw her arms around his neck, her scarlet sleeves trailing over his breast. "Oh, Ani San!" she sobbed, "elder brother, speak to me, to little Umè; 'tis I who have slain thee!"

Kojiro stood staring at them, his face convulsed with passion; again it looked like fiery bronze. The sound of the struggle had brought his servants, and Owannon and Saigo as suddenly appeared, conjured from the pit, it might be

by the prince's fearful wrath. Owannon uttered shrill cries, lifting the unconscious Umè; Saigo, green with fright, dragged Masamitsu toward him. The boy stirred and groaned.

Yokogi, Kojiro's steward, came a step nearer and bowed profoundly.

"What is it?" demanded the prince sharply.

Yokogi murmured a few inaudible words.

Kojiro put up his dagger and turned to Saigo.

"On Thursday I come with Inouyé."

Saigo was shaking. "Great Lord, if it is augustly safe, if I —"

The prince glared at him. "I come on Thursday."

Saigo prostrated himself quickly beside the toad.

Kojiro glanced at Umè. She was leaning against Owannon's knees, her white face half hidden by her hair, and she did not heed him. When he felt he controlled, he moved away deliberately, followed by his attendants. They went slowly down the path, and Saigo watched them. Twice he wiped the cold beads from his forehead, twice he tried to wet his dry lips with his parched tongue and could not.

At the gate Kojiro turned and looked back. Then he raised his hand with a gesture poignantly significant and more eloquent than speech.

Saigo groveled beside the toad, but Owannon, looking after Kojiro and his retinue, passed her

hand over her own lips to hide a smile, a smile as malicious as it was triumphant.

“Nasutoki no Emma-gao!” she said grimly.

“I augustly forget not thee, Prince Kojiro!”

XI

MASAMITSU threw both arms around Umè, facing Owannon and Saigo.

"I will protect her!" he said passionately. "I will protect her with my life; you shall not sell her to Prince Kojiro."

Owannon laughed; she had recovered from the shock of Nishida's attack, but there were purple marks on her throat.

"Oh, you will protect her!" she mocked, "crowing cockerel! You will protect her — Ma-a-a!"

The boy's face whitened with passion, his long eyes burned. Unlike Umè, he was all Japanese in looks; only his unusual height and heroic build suggested the Eurasian. "I will!" he said, between his teeth.

Umè looked up at him, then she turned slightly and threw one arm around his neck. "Ani San," she said gently, "let me speak. It can't be that Owannon means to sell me to the prince! Owannon San, it surely is not so? You will save me? I have miserably served you, I am poor and rude, but, surely, you will not let me go?"

Saigo growled angrily, beckoning to Inouyé,

who had just appeared in the distance. Owannon did not reply, and Umè, slipping out of her brother's arms, ran to her.

"Owannon San, you will save me?"

But Saigo intervened. "Lord of Hell," he said, "what's all this? Did I not pay your wretched aunt for you? Have I not the right to dispose of you, and such as you? Hold your tongue, singing doll; you marry the great Prince Kojiro. August is your destiny, great his condescension!"

"You shall not sell my sister!" cried Masamitsu, with fury. "Miserable wretch, she is samurai!"

"Dog!" replied Saigo, "what are you? A base-born brat, a —"

Masamitsu dealt him a fierce blow between the eyes. "Liar!" he said.

It was too much; Saigo had received the toad with meekness from Kojiro, but Masamitsu's blow was the last straw. The camel rejected it. He threw himself on Masamitsu and they closed in a fearful struggle. Umè tried to drag her brother away, but the boy's fury had passed all bounds, and he fought wildly. So did Saigo. The man was old but he had muscles like steel springs, and he was animated by hatred so intense that it poured through his veins like new wine. He got Masamitsu's throat in his grip, and hung there, but the boy, wrenching an arm back, dealt

him a fearful blow. They went down together and bit the dust.

Umè tried to reach them, but Owannon seized her by the arms and held her pinioned while Inouyé dragged Masamitsu away. Even then Saigo hung on like a bulldog, and Inouyé struck his hands from the boy's throat; then he slipped a cord around Masamitsu, binding his arms to his body. Afterwards he lifted him on his back, as Yokogi had lifted old Nishida.

Umè shrieked. "Oh, Inouyé, let my brother go! I will do anything, I will not speak again. Oh, let Masamitsu go!"

Owannon struck her on the cheek with the flat of her hand. "Be still!" she said, "Inouyé only takes him away. Here he will come no more; such trash comes not here. Be still, I say, or we'll pitch the boy into the bay!"

Umè slipped down on the bank and hid her face in her long flowered sleeves. "Kwannon, have mercy!" she breathed; "other mercy is there none for Umè-ko!"

She could hear Inouyé's footsteps drag on the path under her brother's weight, she knew he would be thrust into the jinrikisha and carried away, that she would not be allowed to see him again. She was aware that for days she had been virtually a prisoner; now she knew why. But why should Kojiro desire to marry her? She asked herself that question, even while she crushed

her face against the polished leaves of the yu-zuri-ha. Her cheek stung from Owannon's blow and her soul writhed under the insult. Her samurai blood resented it so fiercely that she tingled with passionate anger. What right had Owannon to strike her? Then she remembered the money that had been paid to her august aunt, that had saved the little ones at Horiuchi from starvation. Umè hid her face in despair. She heard Saigo speaking angrily to Owannon, and the little musumēs were running to and fro; some guests must be arriving at the tea-house. In her dull anguish Umè no longer cared. Suddenly Owannon seized her by the shoulder and shook her violently.

"Get up, miserable jade!" she commanded. "Here comes the British barbarian; he will ask for you! It is silly to cry! Dance, sing, laugh. Have I not honorably bought you? Up, lazy fool!"

Umè rose; her long hair still fell over her shoulders; her little white face was wet with tears. In the struggle her drum had been crushed; she picked it up now and looked at it strangely, turning it in her hands.

Owannon stamped her foot. "Bind up your hair, little demon; you look like a witch! You —" she stopped short, staring at her.

For Umè's expression had changed suddenly and wonderfully, from grief to pleased surprise;

she pushed back her glossy hair with both small hands, her gay sleeves fluttered. Owannon turned swiftly and saw Hallard coming up the path under the wistaria. He was looking straight at Umè, and something in his face answered the girl's kindled glance. Owannon lowered her head, snakelike, and peered at them with glittering oblique eyes. Saigo came up and caught Umè by the sleeve. He, too, had seen Hallard coming.

"Away with you, girl," he commanded, "go to the hairdresser."

Umè turned her white face again toward the approaching barbarian, and held out her free hand with a pathetic gesture.

"Sayonara!" she sobbed.

Hallard sprang up the low stone steps below the sa-sa hedge. "Umè San!" he exclaimed, "what is it, child? What have they done to you?"

Her face was full of appeal, as she held out her small hands imploringly. "I am forbid to speak lig thad — I —"

Saigo fairly dragged her toward him, whispering to her in Japanese.

Hallard was furious. "Hold on!" he said sharply, towering over the two old Japanese, "let that girl go — do you hear? Drop her arm!" Saigo caught his eye and, remembering Kojiro's toad, obeyed sullenly. "Now!" Hallard

looked from the husband to the now smiling wife, "clear yourselves!"

They bowed low and rubbed their hands; smiling but unmoved.

"Clear yourselves! Oh, confound it, how do you say it? What is 'get out' in Japanese, Umè San?"

Umè dared not reply. Freed from Saigo's clutches, she had fled across the path to Hallard and stood beside him now like a frightened child. She was controlling herself, her trembling hands were clasped tight under her sleeves, but her lovely face was white as the white pomegranate that bloomed beside the way.

Very calmly Saigo and Owannon continued to genuflect. Saigo's bald head shone above his gay robes. Owannon's kimono glimmered with twisted gold scrolls and embroidered peonies.

"Honorable Guest, it is tea-drinking time," said Owannon smoothly; "condescend to let the musumè serve it."

"August time to clear out it is!" said Hallard sharply, "you understand me, Owannon; go!"

The two bowed very low.

"Time for Umè San to go also, Honorable Guest," said Saigo, mincing.

"Umè San stays here with me for half an hour. Go!"

Hallard was very angry and he was very large; besides he was near the British Koshi Sama, and

there were reasons — The two genuflected again and slowly, very slowly, edged away.

“Go on!” said Hallard impatiently, “trot over that bridge, shoo!” He clapped his hands as he spoke.

They bowed again and went reluctantly, Owannon leading, and Saigo following, across the little bridge where the lotus flowers floated in their brown pool. Two or three tea-houses were lit up in the garden and a few guests sat under the wistaria, but in the hollow by the miniature lake Hallard and Umè were alone. The girl was still shivering with nervous terror and he saw it. He sat down on the green bank under the yuzuri-ha.

“Sit down, Umè San, and tell me all about it,” he said kindly.

But Umè knelt, Japanese fashion, her hands under her sleeves and her small face averted. The gay flowered robe of the geisha contrasted strangely with her white face and unbound, beautiful hair. At first no words came and Hallard waited. He saw that she was struggling to keep back tears, ashamed of her emotion.

“What is it, Umè?” he asked at last, even more gently.

“They have sold me to Prince Kojiro.”

“It’s monstrous! There must be some way to stop this!”

She shook her head, but could not speak.

Hallard clasped his knees, staring into space.

What she had told him laid hold of him; he measured the height of his feeling for her by the depth of his rage against Kojiro. It was madness, he had always known it as a madness, but it was there!

Umè clasped her hands tightly together. "He augustly condescends to marry me."

Hallard turned on her. "Hush! Aren't you ashamed to say it? That old villain! Umè, are you willing to marry him? Does he really mean to marry you?"

"He says so, Superiority."

"My God!" cried Hallard, bitterly.

"He has paid for me to Owannon San," she went on quietly. "It is whad is done, I — I must humbly obey to save Masamitsu, I —"

Hallard interrupted. "Never mind Masamitsu. He has no right, no one has any right, to command such sacrifice. You don't know what you're doing. Are you willing, have you ever been willing, to be Kojiro's bought and paid for slave?"

She looked up and her blue eyes met his searching her face; the color went up beautifully to the pure arch of her brow.

"Once I didn't know — I thing," she hesitated; "no more I am so — now I — I hate him!"

"And you mean to let them marry you to a man you hate?" Hallard questioned her, poi-

gnantly aware that he longed to know all. "At first you didn't care, but now? Umè San, do you love any one else?"

Her eyes sank fearfully, a faint color still tinged the lovely oval of her face. "Lofe? — we hav' not the word 'lofe' — lig you do. I don't know it in Nippon, not ad all, no, never-r!"

Hallard smiled involuntarily. "Are you sure, Umè San? It is said that 'love finds out the way!' I fancy it does, even in Dai Nippon. Is there no 'lofe' here, Umè?"

She shook her head. "Not lig you say, Superiority. Ver' strange way barbarians talk of lofe; Nipponese don't understand so. I—I never-r heard it before."

"And they have sold you to Kojiro?" Hallard thought, his head bent.

Umè, kneeling near him, bent down and pulled at the green grass with shy, rosy-tipped fingers. He fell silent and her heart sank. She looked at him from under long lashes, divinely shy as a wood nymph.

"I—I don't dislig the word 'lofe,'" she said gently; "you might teach me to lig the word ver' much, maybe."

Hallard groaned. "Umè San, there are ties of blood, of faith, of honor," he said bitterly; "very dearly would I like to teach you the word. Has no one taught you even the alphabet here? What has your life been, little girl?"

She clasped her hands loosely on her knee while she still knelt on the bank. She turned her face from him toward the north, and her eyes grew dreamy.

"I was born way up in the hills, beyond the cherry trees of Yoshino, where one may see the great mountains of the gods. There were only Masamitsu and me. Our honorable mother became a Buddha and left us. A long way we came then to my aunt ad Horiuchi, only Yumoto was with us. We are all lamentably poor. To pay for all my aunt sold me to Owannon San. Never before was I unhappy."

"You have been always happy?" he looked at her intently, beginning to understand the innocent childlike nature at last; "always, though so lamentably poor?"

She smiled. "Thad did not matter, Superiority. We played in the great wood, Masamitsu and I; we saw the lovely dance of the honorable waterfall, we heard the uguisu, we found the lilies thad bloom so augustly in the shade. We were happy!" she clasped her hands close, "we were happy lig the uguisu. But now — it is not lig thad, they hav' sold me to — Kojiro!"

Hallard leaned forward, his elbows on his knees. "Umè San, are you willing to go to Kojiro?"

Her white lips quivered. "I hav' no choosing, Superiority."

"You will go — without a struggle?" He questioned her bitterly; he was in pain himself, and the selfishness of pain ignored the blow he struck.

She raised her head, and again the glory and the power shone in her inspired face. "Superiority, the samurai girl can die."

"Umè!" he exclaimed sharply; he knew now what she meant to do.

She turned toward him and smiled, her eyes sweet with the dawn of love. "Yes, Lord."

"You can't mean — my God, you can't mean to kill yourself!" Involuntarily he had caught hold of her flowing sleeve.

She let her little hand drop lightly on his; it was a touch as fleeting and light as a butterfly's, but he felt the rosy fingers for an instant. "In another birth you will see me, Lord, not as I am, not like this, but you will know me!"

Hallard struggled with himself; he felt like a drowning man; the stream rose higher and higher to his lips. He must be true to his pledges, he must remember his honor, but his soul loathed the fate that he had cut out for himself. And here, here was something so lovely, so strange, so charming! Temptation tugged hard at his heart.

"Umè San," he said, "you shall not marry Kojiro, I swear it! I'll pay the price to Owannon and set you free!"

She looked at him gently; her long beautiful eyes kindled, she smiled.

"Umè," he said, "look away; if you do not, I may, against my will, try to teach you the word."

"Whad word, Superiority?" she asked demurely.

"The one word, Umè, the mystic word." He bent over suddenly and took her hands in his and looked at them. They were beautiful and tapering; they fluttered a little and then lay still in his. "Umè San, do you not already — a little — know the word?"

She looked up and then down, her cheeks glowed. "Not lig you say, Superiority," she murmured. "In Nippon the word 'lofe' is not known. But —" she hesitated, a smile fluttered on her lips, the dimple came shyly — "if you — you lig me to know — eh?"

In spite of himself Hallard laughed. "Oh, Umè San, oh, little coquette, all the while you knew the word!"

She shook her head, gently drawing away her hands. "No, Superiority, not lig you teach me, but — you are good to me, augustly kind, in my heart —" she looked up solemnly — "in my heart already I know — lig you teach me, Lord!"

Again Hallard groaned. He rose and walked to and fro in the little path. His soul was in travail. He would save her, he must save her

from Kojiro. More than that — what could he do? What could he do? The blood beat in his brain. Umè had risen too; she stood meekly, her hands under her flowered sleeves, her eyes followed him. To her he was a deliverer, a kind of demi-god. Already she began to understand that there had been one more reason why she would rather die than marry Kojiro. Love was teaching her the reason.

Hallard turned. "Umè San," he said bitterly, "in England, also, people are bought and sold in marriage, they make suitable matches! In England, also, we marry for money and for all reasons but love. Umè, I am going to marry an English lady."

She stood quite still. The shock of his words seemed to suspend her breath, but she made no sign. Only her face whitened to her lips. Two little spots of carmine stood out weirdly on her pale cheeks.

There was a moment of silence. Then came her voice, sweet and low but strange.

"You — you lofe her lig you say, Superiority?"

Hallard stood still too, looking at her. "No, Umè San, no! Her father wishes it, my dead father wished it, too. I drifted into the engagement. We don't love each other, Umè, but I'm bound. I have given my word, I must keep it."

Her head drooped, so did her winged sleeves; she looked like one of the beautiful scarlet lilies

of Atami after the sea wind has beaten them to the earth.

"I wish you to be happy, Lord," she said softly, "I wish —"

"Umè, hush!" he cried bitterly, "don't mock me. I must do what is right, I must save a shred of my honor. But I swear I'll free you from Kojiro."

She smiled sadly.

"Umè —" Hallard began again and stopped short.

He had suddenly heard Dean shouting his name. He looked around and saw Dean and De Freece both standing by the nearest tea-house, regarding him with amazement that they seemed at no pains to conceal. He reddened.

"Umè," he said hastily, "there are my friends; they will, perhaps, help me find a way out, a way to save you completely from these people. You must not go — Umè!"

She looked over her shoulder and smiled again, the ghost of a smile. "I come back again, Superiority," she said. "I go to arrange my hair with flowers, I must dance for your honorable friends, I —" her voice broke pitifully — "I'm only a geisha girl, Lord."

"Umè!" he tried in vain to stop her, "Owanon will keep you; stay here!"

"I will come;" she smiled at him, and this time her eyes were kind again; "surely I will

come, Lord. But I must dance — or then surely I cannot come; I must dance, sing, make glad! It is for thad I am permit to live!”

“You will come back?” he called after her, sharply pained.

She looked over her shoulder once more, her eyes tender, pathetic, infinitely sweet. “Condescend to wait, Lord!”

XII

HALLARD sat moodily in the little tea-house; he had not responded very cordially to the greetings of his friends, and he rested his elbow on Owannon's polished lacquer and looked out across the Garden of the Dragon. The afternoon was far spent; the crest of Fuji was deeply touched with sunshine, the earth began to drop into long curls of mist. The little white pomegranate stood like a ghost in the path.

Hallard noticed none of these things. One thought prevailed, — Umè was to marry Kojiro.

Thompson Dean's keen, kindly eyes rested thoughtfully on his friend's face, but he made conversation with De Freece. Meanwhile, far off in the garden, arose the weird music of samisen and kokyū and koto. It began at first with a single plaintive note, vague and soft, a mere breathing of music, then the geishas' little drums beaten evenly, and finally the instruments were blended all together in wild sad harmony. It continued a long way off, plaintive, teasing. Without volume and body of sound, it seemed like

a wraith of some unforgettable tune, the sighing of a sorrow-stricken heart.

Umè was to be forced to marry Kojiro. Hideous but incontrovertible fact!

The little musumë, on her knees, served tea and ceremonial cakes.

"How many times a week are you in Yokohama now, Arthur?" the chaplain asked pleasantly, avoiding Hallard's silence.

"Pretty often, twice a week this month," said De Freece, without enthusiasm. "The Old Man sends me down to arrange that Beaumont arrest trouble with the Consul. It's a beastly nuisance. Of course the Japs were right, but he's a British subject. No one knew it, though!"

"He looks like a Frenchman," Dean admitted.

"His mother was a Russian. He's been wandering around the globe without passports and then expects the home government to keep him in its waistcoat pocket," retorted De Freece carelessly. "Crazy kind of a loon, married a geisha girl, and made a darned ass of himself generally."

Hallard reddened darkly. "What's the row?" he asked briefly.

De Freece put up his glass and looked at him coldly; his manner toward Hallard lately had been constrained. "You would have known it, if you'd stayed long enough in Tokyo, old man. Beaumont was mixed up in that drunken sailor's row outside of Yokohama. You remember that

I told you the sailor got into a fight at a tea-house over a geisha, and smashed a Jap's head? Well, it seems that the other heathens set on him. Beaumont, who was there, took a hand and smashed more heads, got arrested with the sailor, and appealed to the Consul. It seems he's never had any passports; of course he's a British subject all right. There's been a big row; it was the Chancellor's business, and it's just my luck to have him out of town on leave! But I think to-day we straightened it out. By the way, Hallard, the Ambassador asked for you twice yesterday, before I took the train for Yokohama."

Hallard bit his lip. "Like Beaumont, I'm a transgressor," he replied; "I've outstayed my leave."

"To see me, I hope," exclaimed the chaplain cheerfully. "He and I are old chums, De Freece; we can't live without each other."

"Which accounts for Hallard's visit here," remarked De Freece ironically.

Hallard had to join in the laugh. "After all, Thompson, it's a haunt of yours!" he said.

"My dear Jack, my shoulders are wide," replied the chaplain good-humoredly.

"Lucky for you!" said Hallard dryly, breaking a little rice cake and throwing the fragments at Saigo's fat yellow toad. The toad took two leaps away and squatted, still conscious of Kojiro's clutch on his leg.

Far off still, but approaching, the weird music rose; one recurrent note, shrill and strident, pierced above the humming accompaniment.

Dean set down his cup of tea. "Is Pan in the yama-buki?" he inquired, glancing down the long green vista to the lotus pond. It was twilight under the mochi hedge, but Fuji's peak still reared a rosy crown.

The soft, teasing strains drew near, and ever nearer; the unseen players moved behind the great wistaria vines; the notes hurried now, as if they were pursuing feet, tripping on each other, and now and then there was a sob, a break, a weird long note.

De Freece rose and screwed his glass into his eye, his tall, stiff, military figure a living protest against Orientalism. He gazed interestedly down the green foliaged aisle. The chaplain turned also, but Hallard waited; he seemed to hear Umè's little feet returning, beating time to that weird, strident note. Then suddenly, through the dusk, a beautiful white light appeared, pale and yet radiant, an opal with a heart of fire, a lotus lantern.

Umè set it down before them, knelt and touched the ground with her forehead. Then, rising, she began to dance, gently and gracefully, her lithe figure swaying wonderfully with every weird and piercing note.

Hallard leaned on the little lacquer table again

and watched her, his teeth clenched. He was fiercely angry at fate; to see her there, dancing for the public, a little geisha, a paid servant of Owannon, cut him to the heart. Yet how lovely she was, how evidently innocent; even good old Dean smiled as he watched her. Her dress was splendid, — a white brocade kimono embroidered in gold and a pale green obi covered with golden dragons; her hair, lighter and finer than a Japanese girl's, was dressed with lovely amber pins and a single white flower.

Gravely, beautifully, wonderfully, she danced, as some young priestess might have danced before the temple. She swayed to this side and to that, with the music, recovering herself sharply, seeming to rise from the ground on one long wing-like sleeve, then spurning the earth with her dainty heel. The kimono swayed with her, clung to her, whirled its soft folds about her like the golden-lipped petals of a wind-swayed flower. Unseen but near, the musicians continued to play, the keen sweet note coming again and again.

Hallard leaned back in his chair, shading his eyes with his hand, unwilling that his thoughts should be read. But neither De Freece nor Dean seemed to notice him; they were watching the wonderful dancer, as the white light of her lotus lantern illumined her. She was outlined against the growing darkness like a radiant lily.

All the while she had not looked at Hallard,

but now she turned and began to sing to him, and her face, pale as the white lotus flower, was beautiful, wistful, appealing, with the appeal of a child.

“ ‘ Ah, how my petals
Float in the flower-vase;
Helpless and rootless ;
Sad is my lot ! ’ ”

She sang plaintively, her little hands clasped under her sleeves. The music sank lower, plaintive as her voice, and there was a sob in its weird refrain. Her long wonderful eyes rested for a moment on his, then her head drooped and she sang again sadly, straight from her heart to his:

“ ‘ Peonies, roses,
Faded, are equal ;
Only while life blooms
Differ the flowers ! ’ ”

She sank softly to her knees, touched the ground with her forehead, and rose again as the music ceased. Her little white figure was drooping and helpless as a broken lily.

Far off there was the clapping of hands in the darkness, the murmur of applause. Her audience had been much larger than they supposed, but she was unmoved; all the life and grace and vivacity seemed to have gone out of her. She scarcely heard Dean's kind words of approval.

“ You dance so gracefully, so gravely, that .

you dignify the art," he said gently; "to watch you is to see music interpreted. I'll forgive the geisha tea-houses their dances if you will always interpret the soul of poetry and the spirit of music. But," he added kindly, "I should like to see you look happier."

Umè glanced up at him shyly. "I am happy, Honorable Stranger," she said sweetly; "it makes my soul happy only to see the flowers bloom and the sun shine as spring dawns in Dai Nippon. It is the way of the gods."

"Of the one God," corrected Dean mildly; "you are not altogether a Japanese?" he added.

"My honorable father was like you are, English," she replied quietly; "my mother, samurai."

Dean pushed aside his sweetmeats untasted. "The old story," he said bitterly, glancing at Hallard.

But the young man was in the depths; he still leaned gloomily on the table, and his brow was black. How could he save her? This white flower of a geisha girl! How could he do anything, engaged in honor to Maud Overton, bound by his duties as military attaché of the British Embassy at Tokyo, by his honor as an officer and a gentleman? Yet, through the dusk, like a flower, shone Umè's wonderful face; her long eyes sought his, her lips quivered, she had no other hope.

Far off again came the weird strident note,

the low humming, for the geishas were dancing elsewhere; but Umé stood drooping, a figure of white and gold, her flower face bent low over her lotus lantern, her fingers lightly touching her samisen.

De Freece walked stiffly away, looking at the now lighted garden. This infatuation was an insult to Miss Overton and he resented it, for Arthur de Freece cared much for Maud Overton's rights. Under his stiff, shy exterior he carried the heart of a punctilious man of honor, a soldier and a gentleman. Deeper than that was a fierce resentment that another man should hold so lightly that which he honored profoundly, a good woman's faith.

Left alone with him, Dean leaned over and laid his hand on Hallard's arm. "Jack, old man!" he remonstrated.

Hallard turned sharply, and the two men looked each other in the eye. "Thompson," said Jack, in a low, hard voice, "she is to be sold into marriage, or the mockery of marriage, with Prince Kojiro."

Dean leaned back in his chair and looked at the slender figure, at the little hands straying so delicately over the samisen.

There was an intense pause.

Then the chaplain broke it gravely. "After all, Jack, is it not the best she can hope for? They are married off every day. Kojiro is rich and

great; he must love her or he wouldn't marry her. It seems hard, but — could she look for more? ”

“ My God! ” said Hallard bitterly. “ That child, that young, innocent child! Her soul shines in her eyes. And Kojiro! ”

Dean sighed. “ It's the common fate. How can we judge for them? Race, religion, prejudices, are all against our ideals. Jack, old man, ” again his hand rested on Hallard's arm, “ don't be foolish; could we safely interfere? ”

“ Oh, you hypocrite! ” cried Hallard, exasperated. “ Are you afraid? ”

“ Don't go too far, Jack! ”

“ Thompson, forgive me! ”

“ Surely, my hand on it! I'll do all I can, Jack, but remember! ”

As he spoke, a Japanese runner came into the circle of the light, prostrated himself, and held up a letter.

“ For me, Yoshida? ” Hallard recognized one of the Embassy kurumayas.

“ From the Koshi Sama, Augustness, ” Yoshida replied humbly.

Hallard turned, with a dreary smile, to Dean. “ I am reminded to remember, ” he said dryly, breaking the seal.

He opened his letter and read it by the light of the lotus lantern. Umè, kneeling beside it, continued to play softly on her samisen. Dean

glanced from one to the other with regretful eyes; he pitied the girl, but Hallard — Hallard must be got away.

The letter rustled in Jack's fingers, as he folded it and thrust it in his pocket. His face was grim.

"Orders — back to Tokyo at once," he said, rising. "Thompson, go on with De Freece, I must see Owannon."

Dean rose reluctantly. "Jack, can I do it for you?" he asked, almost diffidently. "Keep out of trouble, my boy; let me act for you."

Hallard laughed bitterly. "Thompson, do you think it would sound well, a chaplain of an English warship negotiating for the purchase of a geisha girl?"

"Jack, you're mad!"

"No; supremely sane."

"Think of your position; think of Overton, the scandal if he quarrels with you; think —" Dean choked on the word.

"Of my honor," Jack filled in dryly. "Thompson, go on with De Freece; you can't turn me now."

Dean stood irresolute; it was so delicate a matter. "I deeply regret it all, Jack," he said sadly; "those who love you best must."

"Good-by!" Hallard replied abruptly, then to the little kneeling figure: "Umè San, remain here a moment until I see Owannon."

But Umè rose and followed him a little way

down the path. "Superiority!" she called softly.

But he did not hear her; he had found Owannon. The old woman was curled up like a toad under the wistaria; the light from one of the red dragon lanterns fell on her sinister face. Hallard stopped in front of her and she immediately bowed to the ground, but her long eyes glittered.

"Owannon San," he said abruptly, "as I understand it, her family have sold you the services of Umè San for a term of years. How much will you take at once, in cash, to let her go free?"

Owannon thought, standing in a humble attitude, her hands tucked into her sleeves. Never had she looked more like the Old Woman of the Three Roads; her narrow oblique eyes seemed to fix themselves on Hallard and penetrate a long way into his consciousness. She considered so long that he lost patience.

"How much?"

"She is worth much to me, Augustness; a great many like her pretty face, and she sings like the uguisu. Honorably worth six hundred ryō, maybe more."

"If I pay it, will you sign the necessary papers securing her freedom, Owannon San? I want no trick about it!" he spoke sternly.

The old woman rubbed her hands softly together and bowed many times. "Saigo Sama say; I not say, Honorable Guest."

"Where is Saigo?" sharply.

She smiled gently. "Gone, very long way gone, Honorable Stranger. To-morrow, next day, he will answer then, not now."

"To-morrow is Tuesday; on Thursday you intend to marry her to Prince Kojiro," said Hallard harshly. "Come, come, Owannon, you and I must understand each other once for all. I shall be here Wednesday, I shall demand an answer; you can't marry O Umè San against her will. Whatever Kojiro has offered you, give me the chance to offer as much and more, and remember—" he played his last card—"remember that I'm close to the British Koshi Sama."

Owannon stood quite still; she did not seem to breathe, but a curious smile passed over her face. Then she bowed very low, her forehead touching the ground.

. "On Wednesday, August Stranger."

Hallard turned reluctantly; he deeply distrusted Owannon, but his orders were peremptory; he must return by the next train and he had scarcely twenty minutes. He would warn Umè, and Wednesday he would return and save her. Beyond that his mind did not go. His old jest about the ball and chain bit deep. He was bound in honor to Maud Overton, but Umè, Umè of the mist and the sea-foam, claimed him!

All around him the gay lanterns of the tea-

garden glowed like gorgeous tulips in the sweet dusk; overhead the stars shone. Faintly, sweetly, mockingly, he heard again the geisha's little drum.

Then, quite suddenly, he found her. She was kneeling beside the lotus pond, her white figure revealed in the half-lights of many lanterns, her face hidden in her sleeves. There was something peculiarly touching and helpless in her attitude. Hallard went over with a heavy heart and stood beside her. She did not seem to notice his approach, her whole aspect was one of childish abandon to sorrow; she was alone, helpless, forsaken. No human love was great enough to reach out across the chasm of caste to rescue her, only the Divine Love, which marks the sparrow's fall.

Hallard stood stricken; he must forsake her, and it cut deep! For the first time he realized how strong a hold she had upon his heart.

"Umè!" he said gently.

She started and looked up, and the radiant change in her pale face was wonderful. The sun seemed to shine suddenly in her beautiful eyes.

"I am here, Superiority," she said softly.

Hallard made a strong effort to speak calmly. "Umè, I must go to-night; my chief has sent for me to Tokyo, but I have told Owannon that I will pay for your release. Wednesday I will return and make some arrangement with her.

I sha'n't let you be sacrificed. You will trust me for that, Umè, won't you? "

She smiled gently. "Always," she said, "but Owannon will not let me go lig thad, Lord."

"She will, for I'll make her! Can't you believe that? Don't you know that I'll help you, child? "

Umè stood with drooping sleeves, more than ever like a wind-blown lily.

"Your Superiority is augustly good to me," she said meekly; "but you — you go? "

"I must, Umè."

She looked up and he saw tears in her eyes. "When you go, Lord, I shall be afraid — afraid lig a ver' lit' child alone in the dark. I hav' only the one friend — and he go! "

Hallard was deeply touched. "Umè, you'll be safe; no harm will come to a child like you, I'm sure of it. I can see your sweet soul in your eyes."

"No, oh, no!" said Umè earnestly, "thad is not so, Lord! Not my soul you see lig thad, it is Hotoke-San, the Lord Buddha, the spirit thad — thad honorably liveth in you. Thad is in the shadow of my eyes, Superiority, — not one of my souls, but your soul, your Buddha, reflected there! Your immortal spirit, lig a light, looks back ad you from my eyes; they are the humble mirrors thad giv' back the image of your face, lig the pool here gives back the sunshine, and now the stars. In my eyes you see only yourself, you understand — so? "

"Dear Umè, I see something far more beautiful in your eyes. I — I can't bear to go and leave you in this hole!"

She smiled; it was a wan smile, but her face was lit with the courage of her spirit. "I sing," she said, "I dance — lig I alway do — I — I only a geisha!"

"Umè, don't say that, don't look like that! Good heavens, I hate to leave you here, but I must! I can't stay; there goes the Temple bell, it is the hour. Umè!" he lost himself and caught her small, ice-cold hands in his, "Umè, I love you!"

A lovely color softened her face even in the lamplight, her beautiful eyes shone. "I — already you teach me the word, Superiority," she said, in her soft, low tones, "the word 'lofe,' I — I lig it now, Lord!"

"You love me, Umè?"

She pointed to a lotus bud, folded and pale in the pool. "My heart lig thad," she said quietly, "ver' small, cold, folded up so — lig a flower-bud, ver' cold, it shiver-r! In the morning the sun will augustly shine on the flower, it will open — and it is all white and gold. So my heart —" she hung her head — "so my heart — when it sees you, Superiority!"

Hallard held her to his own heart, and tried to quiet her, for he felt her shiver of dread at the parting. "Umè, I will come back; fate is cruel,

but I will save you from these people. I must go now — good-by!”

She clung to him, but only for the moment; she made no outcry, she even smiled through her tears, for her samurai blood had taught her the lesson of repression.

“Wednesday I look for you — Wednesday!” she said, trying to smile bravely.

“I will come, don’t be afraid! I will come, Umè.”

“No more will I be afraid; I — I try to be brave lig you, Lord; I remember the word.”

“Say it again, Umè.”

She smiled divinely. “Lofe — I lofe you!” she said softly.

It was hard to leave her, and he turned back twice in the path. Each time she waved to him, her small white figure gleaming with gold, her winglike sleeves fluttering at each gesture of farewell.

“Sayonara!” she called softly.

Again, at the gate, he looked back and saw her, framed in a lantern-lit darkness, a lily of white and gold. He waved his hand encouragingly, and, at last, the gate closed behind him.

Umè stood looking after him; her heart trembling with something akin to happiness, yet sinking with dread. He had gone, and she was alone. He had, indeed, taught her the word, but it was a cruel word when it left her so desolate, with a

new ache of fear and loneliness at her heart. She clasped her hands softly against her breast and stood dreaming, her eyes on the gate.

So absorbed was she that she heard nothing, saw nothing of the stealthy approach of Kojiro and Inouyé. They came up from behind the yama-buki, Kojiro's dark robes seeming to mingle with the darkness, while the light caught and outlined Inouyé's hideous blue back. Owannon and Saigo watched.

Saigo spoke to Owannon. "The British Koshi Sama, — what of him?"

Owannon grinned diabolically, gripping her staff. "The Prince Kojiro pays more. The British Koshi Sama pays augustly if she is married and troubles him no more. She troubles him no more! Ma-a-a! It is easy to say we have married her to the prince." Owannon shrugged her shoulders. "Be quiet, honorable husband."

"Tongue of a shrew, be still!" commanded her amiable lord.

Owannon pointed.

Without a sound Inouyé sprang upon Umè, and threw a scarf over her head; her cries were hushed in its folds. He lifted her lightly and went down the path, led by Kojiro. Not a word was spoken. Yokogi opened the gate, holding his lantern. Deftly and swiftly they tied her hands and feet and lifted her into the waiting jinrikisha. Kojiro himself tied the scarf to the vehicle.

Inouyé lifted the shafts and, as the prince stepped into his own jinrikisha, the procession started. It passed down the steep street from the Garden of the Dragon, it turned aside along the shores of Yedo Bay and traveled northward.

The night closed softly about the two swinging green jinrikishas. The two runners journeyed fast and well; no word was said, no command given. Silently, swiftly, they passed, and over Fuji the stars shone.

XIII

NOTHING could have been more uncomfortable than Hallard's quarter of an hour at the Embassy. Overton received him with sullen disapproval, and sharply declined to accept his excuses. The fact that his Chief was right in his attitude, and the reproof merited, did not alleviate its sting. Hallard was more sharply aware than ever of the qualities in Overton that he detested; our perception of faults in others is always keenest when we are in the wrong. And Hallard knew himself to be deeply in the wrong; no matter how baldly conventional his engagement to Maud was, no matter how little feeling either of them had thrown into it, it existed, it was a fact, an uncanceled bond of honor.

But the bitterness with which he thought of it and of her argued ill for her happiness if he forced himself to fulfil it. She had never shown him more than a sisterly affection; love-making she had avoided, or he had failed to attempt it, yet he certainly accused her in his heart of being to blame for accepting him when she cared nothing for him. He was strong-willed and selfish,

and suddenly, after drifting with the tide, and taking life as it came, he had encountered a new and overwhelming situation. He was at last aware that, like a foolish, hot-headed boy rather than a man, he had fallen madly in love with a little half-caste, a geisha girl, a waif of misfortune. There was a charm about Umè as subtle as it was irresistible; he had never intended to yield to it, yet he had been drawn again and again within its reach, like a moth about a candle. The thought of the contemplated sacrilege of selling her to Kojiro filled him with savage anger. He was resolved to prevent it, but beyond that his mind beat against a blank wall. He was engaged to be married to Maud Overton, and even had he been free, marriage with a little geisha would be madness; yet the thought of Umè battled against his prejudices. There was something too sweet and confiding in the simplicity with which she had shown him her heart to permit him to think lightly of her, or of her love for him. That he could not doubt, and he groaned in spirit when he thought of it, its sweetness and tenderness, compared with the crisp, kindly indifference that he was likely to receive as his portion from his future wife. Maud would be a dignified and appropriate person to preside over his home, she would do the conventional thing, be the conventional matron on all occasions, and give him less affection than she gave her spaniel. While Umè

— the contrast filled him with despair. But Umè was only a little geisha girl, the daughter of the alien and the despised. His soul writhed in the conflict; he was not yet ready to plunge into inevitable ruin for the sake of his mad infatuation, nor was he more resigned to marriage with Maud Overton.

There was only one thing to do, — to save Umè from Kojiro. He tried not to follow the thought to its inevitable conclusion, to imagine Umè's gratitude, her certain devotion, and his own weakness. It was natural that he never thought at all of Maud Overton, who was destined to be the victim of such a marriage.

Hallard, torn between these contending emotions and anxiety about Umè, choked down his anger against Overton, performed some neglected tasks at the Chancery, and accepted an invitation to dinner at Number One, forcing himself to do his part and face both Maud and the Ambassador over the dinner-table.

In spite of his moments of blind rage against her, as the embodiment of a respectable fate, he was suddenly aware of almost a feeling of gratitude toward Maud when she met him in the hall of the Embassy. For the second time she saved him from feeling the embarrassment of the relation. She came down the wide staircase as he entered, and he was struck with the simplicity and dignity of her erect, strong figure, in its simple

low-cut dinner gown of pale blue, her smooth brown hair arranged without an ornament, and only a single rose at her belt. There was always something wholesome about her, something good and true and merry, for she had a merry heart.

He had the embarrassment of a guilty conscience, he experienced a supreme reluctance to play a part; every manly instinct of his nature awoke to keen remorse. He felt as if the shallow mockery of the rôle he had to play rose up and shouted from the house-tops, but Maud was as pleasant as a spring morning. She came down the broad, cool stairs, between the white pillars and the clustered palms, and she held out a friendly hand.

"Deserter!" she mocked gayly, "I thought you'd been all the while in Yokohama, looking for my lotus lantern."

Hallard started and reddened, and seeing that she had touched more deeply than she meant, Maud went lightly on: "You might, at least, have brought me a dragon-fly. I've seen the children catching them at Uyeno, and it reminded me of the days when we caught paper fish with a thread and a crooked pin."

"You shall have one in a cage," he retorted, aware of the Ambassador's frowning presence in the door of the dining-room.

"In a cage!" she turned on him with a flash of apparent annoyance, her eyes sparkling, "how

hateful! I want nothing in a cage, nothing kept against its will. I would open the door and let it go."

Hallard started; something in her manner, in her tone, was a rebuke, light as a feather but tangible. Her clear eyes looked straight into his and she smiled. It was momentary, a glance, a flash, but it revealed to him the situation. He followed her down the hall with almost a feeling of relief. She was angry, wholesomely angry, but not grieved! It would be so much more endurable to quarrel with her, than to feel that she reproached him. But she gave him no opportunities to understand her mood, as she went gayly to her place at the table, opposite the Ambassador. Hallard found that De Freece and Dean were also there, and as he felt the frigid atmosphere of the former's disapproval, he smiled grimly to himself; that Arthur should feel it necessary to champion Maud's cause seemed ridiculous, for Maud was so entirely mistress of the situation.

There were two or three other guests; an attaché of the French Embassy, and Barton Fitzhugh, an English traveler, and his young wife.

The brilliantly lighted Embassy dining-room, the table with its conventional cut glass and silver, and its English dishes, recalled Hallard from his feeling of unreality. Maud and the pretty English-woman talking light commonplaces, De Freece

and the Frenchman making slower and stiffer progress, while Barton Fitzhugh labored with the Ambassador, helped occasionally by Dean, who seemed preoccupied. Thus Hallard had occasional moments when he tried to imagine that Umè was safe in the Garden of the Dragon. Unke and the second boy moved noiselessly around the long table, their presence recalling the Japanese atmosphere, and occasionally Unke's oblique eyes rested inquiringly on Hallard, or he fancied that they did. It was a night after a fiercely hot day, but a light breeze had risen and stirred the split bamboo screens that hung before each large window. There was a graceful cluster of pink lotus flowers on the table, and their heavy perfume seemed to fill the room. The conversation flagged a little, and the Ambassador drank wine, and yet more wine. Then, quite suddenly, Hallard heard a sweet, plaintive note, far off at first, then nearer. The blind amma piped upon his reeds.

"Nothing in the world is prettier than these flowered kimonos — on *them!*" said Mrs. Fitzhugh's light treble, "but on us! My dear Maud, I look like a bolster decorated, and the sleeves catch on everything."

"I love the sleeves," Maud retorted gayly; "they hold perfect billions of things; one could shop-lift in them with miraculous ease. Cook San's little girl disposes of everything I give her

in her sleeves; when she toddles back to the quarters they hang down like saddle-bags. Some day I'm going to give her a go-cart, just to see if she won't conjure it up her sleeve."

"I shall warn her," said Dean; "poor little innocent, how you tempt her!"

"Oh, if you could see what goes up those sleeves!" laughed Maud.

"My wife says I don't notice women's clothes," said Fitzhugh, "but I did notice the gorgeous maple-leafed robes of the geishas at the Maple Club."

"Did they give you the fan drill?" asked Overton, recalling himself from a brown study.

"All sorts of stunts and drills, Ambassador," answered Mrs. Fitzhugh lightly. "It really was beautiful, but the front of my kodak leaked light and spoiled twelve good films. I'm perfectly desperate about it."

"I'll lend you my kodak," said Dean. "It's warranted to take at least six good ones."

Maud turned to De Freece. "Isn't there some place near Tokyo, at Kanagawa, that you told me of, where the geishas danced so beautifully?"

De Freece put his monocle very carefully into his eye. "The Garden of the Dragon," he drawled quietly.

"What an enthralling name!" chirped Mrs. Fitzhugh.

"I saw the place," Fitzhugh thought. "Oh, ah, yes, I recollect! You know, Beatrice, we saw it, and were passing too late to stop, that day we did Yokohama and its environs. It was ripping, stone lanterns and all that outside."

Beatrice remembered; she dimpled suddenly upon Hallard. "Dear me, I know now where I've seen you before, Mr. Hallard; your face was so familiar! You were going into that curious gateway, between the dragon lanterns. I know, because I was snap-shotting the gate."

Dean caught the victim's eye and smiled involuntarily, while the Ambassador looked up in time to see De Freece grin.

"I hope you got my picture, Mrs. Fitzhugh," Hallard said calmly. "I've got an elderly maiden aunt at home and two sisters. It would be a boon to give me a couple of prints; they always want to know if I've grown."

"You shall have them; I'm so glad I took them," she said. "Of course I stormed at first, because you fairly blot out one dragon, but then I told Barton it was good to get a picture of such a great big blond Englishman in Japan!"

"Thank you," Hallard laughed, "you cover me with confusion."

"Madame has the happy gift of bestowing a compliment with both hands," remarked the French attaché blandly, and Beatrice smiled sweetly at him.

"Must be an attractive spot," observed the Ambassador dryly. "Is that where you spend your leave, Hallard?"

"How about those perfectly ripping dancers?" chaffed Fitzhugh,

"Make it singular," said De Freece. "Hallard will tell you all about her; she's simply a stunner."

Hallard stiffened, flushing darkly.

But the Ambassador looked up. "So!" he said bluntly, "there is a dancing lady in it, is there?"

De Freece caught the flush on Maud's face. "A jest, sir," he said lightly; "there are many. One dances better than all the others, I'll admit; a little creature who seems more like a fairy than a human being, with a touch of pathos in her eyes. I believe some of these girls have hard lots," he added, turning to Fitzhugh.

"Do they?" Fitzhugh was engaged in finishing his coffee, for dinner was over; "I don't know. We saw a dance at Tokyo, over the canal; Beatrice can tell you, she snap-shotted. It was ripping, perfectly ripping!"

"It was," Beatrice confirmed, "and the lady had a lot of haskindi up her sleeves; she showered it out at us afterwards. It was lovely, all maple leaves."

"Smelt of sandal-wood so it choked me," said Fitzhugh. "I like to see these dancers, they're

ripping. Where was the place, Beatrice, where they had the sign out, 'mountain whale?'"

Dean laughed. "Yama-kujira," he said, glad of a digression; "they mean venison."

"The idea of calling venison a whale!" said Fitzhugh, and then: "What kind of a geisha girl is that one at the Garden of the Dragon, Mr. Hallard?"

Maud rose suddenly, and Mrs. Fitzhugh had to follow her example.

"We'll leave you to your wine and your cigars and your geishas," Maud said lightly. "Mrs. Fitzhugh and I are going to discuss the Tokugawa Shoguns and the origin of silk-worms."

In the general laugh that followed, Hallard caught her eye, and knew that she had purposely come to his rescue. After all, Maud was a trump; he felt ashamed of his disloyalty to her, ashamed to appear to deceive her. He must tell her the truth and ask her pardon. It was less than manly to let things go; he had his peace to make, his duty to do. Yet, even at that moment, rose Umè's flowerlike face, her eyes that told so much and yet tried to deny, her soft quivering lips, her little chin. A face to dream of, to fascinate you, to enthrall you forever.

The French attaché had engaged Fitzhugh in a discussion about the old and the new cloisonné, of which the latter knew nothing, but at intervals he assured the Frenchman that it was "perfectly

ripping." De Freece and Dean sat near at hand, throwing in a word now and then, with immense amusement, as the Frenchman got his interrogator in deeper and deeper.

Thus the Ambassador and Hallard were practically tête-à-tête. Overton had been drinking a great deal of wine; he was flushed and angry, and tormented in secret by another matter which was like the constant pricking of a goad in his coarse flesh. He set down his empty glass and turned on his subordinate.

"So you spend your holidays, and your self-extended leave, at a tea-garden, the Garden of the Walrus — or what-you-call-it? — flirting with the geisha girls?"

Hallard colored deeply. "I apologize for my delay in returning, sir; it was an unwarranted liberty, I admit," he said coldly. "I don't understand your other references."

"You heard what these people said about the Garden of the Hippopotamus — I mean the Walrus?"

There was a gleam of amusement in Hallard's eyes. "I don't recollect such a place, sir."

"Oh, damn it, what is the name?"

"The Garden of the Dragon."

"Very well, then, the Garden of the Dragon. You were there, I suppose?"

"I was, sir." Hallard's quietude was dangerous.

"Very good. Then you'll admit the geisha girl, I presume."

"Not at all. The young girl they refer to is most unfortunate; they're trying to sell her, to force her into a distasteful marriage. I would gladly help her escape."

Overton started; his face flushed darkly, his eyes grew bloodshot. Hallard, watching him, believed him to be somewhat under the influence of liquor. There was a moment's poignant pause.

Once more the amma piped upon his reeds; his note was very near.

The Ambassador rose from the table, and at this signal the others rose also. Overton turned to Hallard.

"You are engaged to be married to Miss Overton," he said, in a low voice; "as the fiancé of the daughter of the British Ambassador, and military attaché of the Embassy, I desire that you forego geisha tea-houses and geisha girls."

Hallard bowed with a set face.

The Ambassador passed on, leading the way toward the drawing-rooms. "We'll join the ladies now," he remarked brusquely to his guests.

There was a slight confusion; the atmosphere was charged. Dean lingered, glancing at Hallard, but received no encouragement; Jack walked away. He did not intend to follow the Ambassador, his mind was not yet made up. He glanced up at the window opposite and saw that the split

bamboo screen was raised about a foot; in the space between it and the window-sill appeared the rosy face of Pat Maloney.

Hallard looked at him in surprise; Maloney beckoned. His master drew nearer the window; there was no one in the dining-room now but Unke and his assistants. Pat made a speaking-tube of his hands.

"Hist, yer honor!"

"What folly is this, Pat? Is the Chancery on fire, or Number Two blown up?" At Number Two were Jack's quarters in the compound.

"Sure, sorr, the blind ambler wahnts spache wid you. He's afther bringin' a little lady inter the compound instid av a dog and a string. I tould him you didn't wahnt ter be rubbed, but he's afther spakin' ter ye."

A sudden wild fear shot through Hallard. Was it bad news from the Garden of the Dragon?

"Where is he, Pat?"

"Yonder, sorr," Pat pointed.

Hallard drew up the bamboo screen still higher. A broad flare of light from the many windows fell across the close-clipped lawn, caught the splendor of a blooming white hydrangea, and mantled it in snowy blossoms. Not twenty feet away, in the river of light, stood the blue-clad figure of the blind amma. In one hand he held his reeds; the other rested on the extended fingers of his guide. A slender figure in cloudy gray, a touch

of mauve in the gold-clasped obi, a golden scroll on the winglike sleeves, a flowerlike face that showed pale in the light.

Hallard uttered a sharp exclamation of surprise.

"Umè!" he cried.

She looked up and their eyes met. Her face lighted with a beautiful flash of joy and faith.

"Kashikomarimasu (I hear and respectfully obey)," she said softly.

XIV

HALLARD held her in his arms trying to quiet her. She had dropped the hand of the blind amma and run to him like a child. She was tired, frightened, distressed; the scene and the hour were most embarrassing, yet her childish faith in him, a faith as absolute as it was tender, touched him to the soul.

"Umè," he said tenderly, "why are you here? How did you get here?"

She quivered, clinging to him without words. His stern glance passed over her head and rested on the amma. The light revealed his blue-clad figure standing quite still, pathetically helpless, as the blind are in strange places. One hand was extended, feeling the air, the other clasped his reeds to his breast; his sightless eyes were turned toward them.

"Amma-kamishimo-go-hyakmon!" he murmured softly.

Hallard glanced down again at the white face against his breast. The situation was one of great difficulty; why had she followed him? "Umè," he said again, less gently, "it was wrong

to come so far; could you not wait for me, couldn't you trust me? "

" They bound me and dragged me away," she replied; " they tied me in the kuruma, they took me to Prince Kojiro."

" Good heavens, Umè! What can you mean? "

" After you were no more there, Superiority, when my heart break lig the lily stem — so — " she seemed to crack a stem in her fingers — " then they came, Inouyé, and one they call Yokogi, — he is serving Kojiro, — they bind me and take me long, long way — almost here to Tokyo. I cannot see, it is dark, I do not know where I go! Sudden — lig thad! — Inouyé stop; I am in the garden of Prince Kojiro's palace — at Takanawa. I am alone and ver', ver' scared — so! "

" Listen, Umè," Hallard said earnestly, " be sure to tell me carefully; did they dare — Owanon and Saigo — to send you bound to this devil, Prince Kojiro? "

She looked up as earnestly into his eyes, her face illumined, wholly charming. " Ver' surely they did, Superiority, and he, maybe he would hav' killed me — but I escape! I hear talk, I hear much talk about why I must marry with Kojiro. It is becaus' of my father. He is lig you, barbarian English. Saigo told Inouyé, Inouyé told Kojiro. I must be married to the Ko-shaku. Thad is whad we call this kind of daimyō, lig Kojiro is."

"Umè," Hallard stopped her, "who is this blind man, this amma?"

Umè glanced at the amma affectionately. "We are samurai," she said simply. "Yumoto belong ad our clan, he served my honorable mother when we were rich in rice. When we are poor, lamentably poor, he is blind and he goes out to rub away your pains. He remember alway lit' Umè. Is it not so, Yumoto?" she added sweetly, to the blind amma.

"It is so, o jo san!"

"Tell him to wait, Umè, and come inside with me; you need something — food. Umè, are you hungry?"

"Ver' hungry!" she laughed. Care had slipped from her. "I hav' eat not ad all, Superiority, sinze yest'day."

"Good Lord!" Hallard exclaimed. "Come in, child, you'll starve."

Suddenly she clasped her hands under her sleeves, and looked shyly at him. "I not hungry," she said softly, "I not hungry any more, Superiority. I thing of the word you taught me; I do not dislig the word now. My heart is augustly happy when I — I hear you speak it lig thad, I —"

"Umè, tell that old blind man to wait; I must hear the rest of your story, the whole of it, in a word —"

"The word?" she looked up in deep surprise, "the word you teach me? It is lofe!"

"Oh, you darling, you! Go tell the blind amma to wait here; there is a bench for him."

She looked at him with a demurely coquettish smile. "Shall I tell him also — the word?"

"No, you little witch, you know better."

She took the blind amma's hand and led him gently to a seat beside the bay window, then she let Jack lead her into the deserted, but brilliant dining-room.

Even Unke had gone to the kitchen, but there was wine on the table, and a little bread and cake on the sideboard with the roasted meat, that the Ambassador liked in generous style, to the amazement of his native household. As the full light fell on Umè, Hallard saw how exhausted she looked, how pale and haggard. He made her sit down and poured wine for her.

"Drink this, Umè," he urged, "and eat this bread and meat. You look all in, done up! And I must hear it all."

She drank the wine obediently and sat looking at the meat. Then she laughed, a delicate color rising in her pale face.

"Where are the honorable chop-sticks, Superiority?"

"Can't you use our forks, Umè?" Jack sat down beside her and took up a knife and fork. "See — so."

"You teach me this — so, lig thad? Ugh!" she laughed again softly. "I ver' stupid, Supe-

riority; you teach me the word, you teach me to use knife and fork — so? Am I right — lig thad?" She speared a piece of meat and waved it. Her soul seemed without care, and she looked at him happily; "I learn ver' soon now, eh?"

She was irresistible and he told her so. She drew back, sudden tears in her eyes, and hid her face in her hands.

"What is it, Umè? Did I frighten you? For heaven's sake, don't, there, there, don't cry!" He had his arms around her again. "God knows I mean to keep harm away from you, Umè!"

She looked up into his face with a lovely smile, half tearful still. "It is not thad, Superiority, but — but —" she hung her head.

"But what, Umè?"

"You teach me —" she twisted her small hands together nervously, "you teach me so much, so sudden — ver' sudden! The word 'lofe,' I do not dislig it — you —" she blushed divinely — "in Nippon no one kiss — you teach me to — to — it ver' im-proper-r in Nippon, ver'!"

Hallard laughed softly. "Do you 'dislig' it, Umè-ko?"

She looked up very gravely, then her eyes fell before his.

"I — I don't thing I — dislig it ver' much, I —"

He waited patiently, smiling. "Yes, Umè?"

"I —" she looked up — "I love you," she said simply.

"You adorable little witch; when did you discover it?"

She laughed. "I — I don't know! I thing alway — in a former birth you love me — eh?" Then suddenly she shivered and paled. "They marry me to Kojiro. Saigo is paid a large sum to marry me to Prince Kojiro. I must never be any more Umè-ko! Overton Sama, he not lig I should. I know — I know, I thing, why," she nodded, "my honorable mother —"

Hallard interrupted. "Overton?" he cried, startled. "Listen to me, Umè, tell me the story; who speaks of Overton? Do you know who Overton is?"

She shook her head. "Inouyé knows, Superiority; he tell it to Saigo and Yokogi. I must marry Kojiro becaus' my father is barbarian — see? Then I remember whad my honorable mother told to me and Masamitsu, my brother, when she became a Buddha."

"What was it, Umè?" Hallard demanded earnestly.

"She was married to the barbarian; she was his wife, Superiority. It is so thad I must marry too. Overton Sama want me to marry, so Inouyé said. My august father lives, Superiority; it is he, I thing, who wish me to marry, who else?"

"Overton! Good heavens! Umè, are you

sure? Do you think Overton is your father's name?" Jack's agitation was great.

She nodded vigorously. "I thing Inouyé say so to Saigo Sama. Yes, I hear it, Superiority. Overton Sama; I thing my august father is so called."

Jack rose and walked up and down in strong excitement. "Is it possible?" he muttered. "Is this the key; can it be possible?" He stopped in his walk and came back to her. "Listen, Umè, this is serious. Colonel Overton is the British Ambassador; he is the father of the lady I am to marry. If what you tell me is true, he is also your father."

Umè sighed. "You marry barbarian lady, Superiority," she murmured, her white face pathetically childish, "ver' soon?"

"God knows!" Hallard walked again. "Tell me about your people, Umè. Where is your brother?"

"Masamitsu? He wait for me in Tokyo, right here, Superiority. It was he thad was outside the gates of Kojiro's garden. After I got there they untied me and leave me alone in the big garden, ver' big garden. I was afraid; I hid there behind the honorable bamboo. Then Yokogi came out alone and he call: 'Umè, Umè San!' I keep ver' still; my heart it beat in my throat. He call, then he goes to the gate, the lit' side gate by the hama-matsu, and he opens it.

‘Masamitsu,’ he say, ‘I can’t find Umè.’ But when I heard Masamitsu I run to him, crying: ‘Ani San, I am here!’ And Yokogi say: ‘In Shaka’s name, take her quickly, Masamitsu, for Kojiro will never-r let her go! And for me, I am dead if he know I open the gate.’ And Masamitsu and I ran ver’ long way, and I faint, and he is in the dust by the wayside. Then Masamitsu carry me, and Yumoto let me come here to you, Superiority.”

“Thank God, you escaped!” he said, deeply moved. “But these villains! Go on, Umè, tell me all, — where were you born? — all!”

“Where was I born?” She clasped her hands on her knee and looked up dreamily. “Way, way off, Superiority, in the mountains, where the pines talk to each odder, and the cherry trees bloom on all the slopes, and the gods walk there in old time. A lit’ house I remember, ver’ lit’ house; the trees whisper about it, and the yellow lilies, all the ground was full of them! I hear there alway the uguisu, my bird, and the yamabato, so sweet. I do not remember my honorable father, Superiority, but my mother — yes! When she died she tell it to Masamitsu and me. Our august father was barbarian, barbarian English, lig you!” she smiled softly at Hallard, “lig you, Superiority. She said she want us to know he was married to her; sometime, she say, sometime he want his children! She bless us, she died —”

the girl clasped her hands tightly, her lips quivered, her heart was full of sad memories. "Superiority, when she was dead the blue flame came over her heart, her soul depart to the Meido!"

Hallard watched her with deep emotion. He loved her, he realized that his position was an impossible one, but his mind refused to grasp the amazing possibilities of her revelation. "Umè," he said excitedly, "tell me, is there any one who knows? Who is this aunt?"

Umè looked up in surprise. "O Yoshi San?" she smiled; "my mother's sister, she know nothing, nothing at all! She hate the foreign barbarians; she don't lig me becaus' I am foreign barbarian half so!"

"You poor little darling, do they hold that over you?"

She nodded again, and then smiled through her tears. "I—I lig to be lig you!" she said demurely.

He laughed. "You think me 'lig' you, Umè? A great big fellow like me?"

"I also foreign barbarian half, Superiority."

"The most charming barbarian half I ever saw, Umè. But my name is not Superiority, it's Jack."

She looked thoughtful, then the charming dimple appeared. "How you call it? Eh? Jash? Is that lig it? Jash!"

"To be sure, Jash! I never liked it so much

before." He laughed delightedly. "You have a name all to yourself now. Umè, you haven't eaten a thing!"

"How can I eat, Superiority? You ask so many questions, and I have no honorable chopsticks, only barbarian spear with many spikes." She laughed softly. "I not hungry now any more, I'm happy, Jash." She pronounced it bewitchingly, looking up coquettishly, happy as a child.

She was so irresistible that he forgot the terrible situation. "Are you happy with me, Umè?"

She blushed, but she was very childish. "Ver' happy," she said; "you let me stay, Jash?"

He groaned. "Umè, it's all awful. God knows it's hard for me to see a way out of it. I mean to free you of Kojiro. Would you be safe with your aunt?"

Her face fell, her wonderful eyes fixed themselves reproachfully upon his face. "You send me away, Superiority?"

His own face whitened. "I must!"

She slipped suddenly to the floor and lifted her hands in supplication. "No, no, Superiority! I can't go to — to Kojiro; I rather die! Let me stay. Umè will serve you, Umè will be a slave. So will Masamitsu, becaus' you are kind to me!"

He raised her tenderly from the ground. "Umè, you don't understand, you can't understand!

You couldn't stay with me. It would be a far greater wrong for me to keep you, than to let you go. I love you too well to harm you so much! I wouldn't wilfully hurt a hair of your head, and it is impossible for me to keep you, unless — " he clenched his hands, thinking — " unless I can get my own freedom! Umè, you must go back to Masamitsu, the amma must take you; to stay here is to ruin you, child! And if — if Overton is your father — by heaven, I'll make him acknowledge it, I'll force him to right you! But now, Umè, come — we must go! "

She clung to him weeping. " No! " she moaned, " no — I — I love you, Jash! "

" My God, don't make it too hard for me to do my duty by you, dear! Not more than I love you, Umè; if I loved you less — "

" On my soul, a very tender scene! " said a mocking voice, " a very proper scene for the British Embassy! "

Hallard started and looked up, Umè still clinging to him, her long sleeves trailing across his shoulders.

In the door stood the Ambassador.

XV

OVERTON moved to the center of the room and stood regarding Hallard and Umè with the air of a judge.

"A peculiarly interesting position this, for a future son-in-law," he sneered; "who, pray, is the lady?"

Hallard reddened darkly and bit his lip to keep back a furious retort. But Overton courted his fate.

"The Embassy dining-room is scarcely the place for geisha girls, sir. I repeat my question, who is this young person?"

"Your Excellency is mistaken," Hallard replied haughtily. "Neither I nor this young girl merit your insinuations. She is both unfortunate and unhappy, and she is entirely innocent. Her presence in the house is my fault; I brought her here to give her food and —"

The Ambassador cut him short. "I have no doubt it's your fault. We've had a little too much of this! She, I presume," he added, with bitter irony, "is the cause of your flagrant absence from your duties!"

"Don't press me too hard, Colonel!" Jack exclaimed, in a low, passionate voice; "I'm aware that I have been a delinquent; in the matter of protracted absences, I have apologized and I still apologize. This young girl is not to blame for my shortcomings."

Overton glowered darkly at Umè, a deep flush mounting to his hair. "They have a saying in France, sir, about finding the woman, which covers most cases."

Hallard controlled himself with an effort, but the hand on the back of Umè's empty chair quivered. She was standing meekly, her little hands clasped under her sleeves, her startled eyes fastened on the Ambassador's angry face.

"Your Excellency," said Hallard, in the same low tone, "I trust you will not say things that you may regret. This is the geisha girl from the Garden of the Dragon at Kanagawa, and her name is — Umè San."

Some emotion, powerful but partly controlled, convulsed Overton's harsh features for an instant; then, meeting Hallard's eye, his anger increased to fury. "By your own confession, a geisha girl!" he said, "and you have brought her here, or been followed by her. Mr. Hallard, your conduct is unbecoming an officer and a gentleman!"

"Colonel Overton, I entreat you to forbear!" exclaimed Jack passionately. "You're mistaken in your surmises, and you're forcing me into a

position where, to justify myself, I may say things that we'll both regret."

The Ambassador raised a decanter with an unsteady hand, poured a glass of wine, and drank it down at one gulp.

"Keep your threats to yourself!" he said fiercely; "you've no business to bring this girl, this little baggage, into the Embassy!"

"Sir!" Jack began.

But they were unexpectedly interrupted; Umè suddenly prostrated herself before Colonel Overton; she pressed her forehead to the ground, and he stood staring at her, strangely bewildered. Hallard sprang forward and tried to raise her from the floor.

"No, no!" she said sweetly, "no, Jash, I hear him speak lig thad to you! It is not your fault. Augustness," she turned to Overton, "I come here this night, I miserably desire to see Hallard Sama. It is I who am so ver' wicked; punish me, Augustness."

For a momemt, contending feelings seemed to struggle for possession of the Koshi Sama. He looked at Umè like a man who was fascinated by a vision, as Macbeth looked at Banquo's ghost. Then he recoiled from her, moving back toward the window, thus separating himself from them, so that his voice could be heard by any one outside, and certainly by the blind amma, who sat upon the ground under the bay window.

Umè pleaded sweetly, and Jack stood back, listening, noting the effect.

"He not to blame, Augustness; I am to blame. I in great trouble, ver' great trouble, I come to him. I hav' in all the world, no other friend, Koshi Sama."

"It may be the fashion here to chase men to their homes, Miss Umè," Overton replied, with biting irony, "but I recommend that you do it, another time, to a private citizen, not to a British officer and an attaché of our Embassy."

"For God's sake, Ambassador!" exclaimed Hallard, "remember that she is innocent as a child!"

Overton smiled furiously. "Then let me recommend that you keep your 'affairs' outside the compound!"

"I see that you are determined to insult me, Colonel Overton!"

"I'm determined to make you remember that you're a British officer, sir, and my subordinate, besides being engaged to marry my daughter. What business have you to bring this dancing-girl here?"

Jack's face whitened with fury. "You tempt me beyond endurance, Ambassador," he said bitterly, "you shall have the truth. This young girl is the daughter of a samurai mother and an English father. The Englishman was married to her mother, so much she knows. But the

mother is dead and the father has dishonorably abandoned his two children, for there is a brother. The child, therefore, left as a burden to an impoverished aunt, has been sold into servitude to two wicked old Japanese, Owannon and Saigo, of the Garden of the Dragon. They connive with the English father to sell her into the bondage of a marriage that is hideous, with Prince Kojiro. By the mercy of a slave she escaped and came to me for help. I have promised it, and I intend to give it."

The two men faced each other furiously; Overton's dark face was purple with rage. Umè again fell on her knees.

"Augustness, forgiv' him!" she pleaded; "it is lit' Umè who does miserably wrong; punish me!"

Overton pushed her roughly aside. "Get up, girl!" he said fiercely; "'assume a virtue, if you have it not!'"

"Good God!" cried Hallard passionately, snatching Umè from his reach, "how dare you touch her roughly, Colonel Overton? You know what I know!"

"Damn you, sir! What do you know?" Overton drew nearer, his hands clenched.

"What do I know?" Jack put Umè gently away, confronting his furious Chief. "This child overheard the villainous plot between these coolies, that old witch, Owannon, and her father!

That blackest villain, her father. She knows her father's name."

Overton started, but recovered himself instantly and laughed, a bitter, mocking laugh. Again he reached for the decanter and poured wine. Jack stood facing him, tense and white; he was past caution now.

Unnoticed by either, the blind amma came slowly into the room, feeling his way, one hand clasping his reeds, the other following the wall, finding the turn from the door. He had entered softly, having left his getas outside. Once inside the room, he seemed to feel their presence; he stopped, listened, and turned his face toward them; his lips quivered but no sound came. Little Umè had buried her face in her sleeves, and was weeping.

"She knows her father's name," said Jack again, and his voice thrilled with passionate anger; "it is Overton!"

The Ambassador set his empty glass on the table and turned. Still he did not see the blind amma.

"Well! And what of it?" he asked sneeringly.

"You are her father," said Hallard.

Overton turned on him wildly. "I am! You have it now, sir, I am! But what is that to you? If I admit that I'm her father, do I admit a marriage with her mother? Do I give her any right

to hang on to me, to pursue me to the Embassy to blackmail me? ”

“ Good heavens, Colonel Overton! ” cried Hallard, “ what wild nonsense! That sweet young girl, Umè, blackmail you! She is your daughter, you admit it; I believe you were married to her mother! ”

“ Believe what you please, Mr. Hallard,” the Ambassador retorted insultingly, “ believe that the moon is made of green cheese! But don’t ask me to believe but one thing of her, after what I saw myself to-night, in this room, — of her, I say, and of your relations with her! ”

Umè sprang up with a little cry of agony, and tried to throw herself between them, but it was too late.

Hallard, white with passion, turned and struck his Chief full in the face with his bare hand.

XVI

HALLARD, with a confused consciousness of having struck in blind rage, found himself pinioned by Dean and De Freece.

"Fool!" cried the latter, as Jack struggled.

Dean remonstrated with more affection. "Jack, Jack!"

And Hallard, becoming suddenly aware that Maud was there, besides the blind amma and the native servants, stood still, white with passion.

Meanwhile, the Ambassador had controlled his own furious impulse to close with his young subordinate. His face was darkly flushed, and the mark of Jack's stinging blow showed plainly on his cheek. For the moment he was beyond words; he could only stare fiercely at his assailant, his angry mind trying to devise some humiliation great enough to wipe out the affront.

Umè, standing quite still between the two, looked from one to the other with a mute despair that was infinitely touching. She began to understand that she was the cause of this trouble, that her presence there had plunged Hallard into a quarrel with this stout, red-faced man, who inspired her only with fear and disgust.

It was Maud who broke the terrible pause. She was very pale but quite calm, and she walked straight up to her father and laid her hand upon his arm.

"Father, I heard — what was said. Is it true? Can it be true?"

The colonel angrily shook her hand off his arm. "Mind your own business!" he said harshly.

Maud drew back sharply, but her eyes rested on Umè. "I think, in a way, it is my business," she rejoined simply; "who is this young girl?"

The Ambassador laughed bitterly. "You'd better ask your fiancé!"

Maud turned, with a new sweet dignity. "I will," she said. "Jack, tell me what it all means. We heard you and father quarrelling and we came — Unke," she suddenly observed the Japanese servants huddled in the door, "you may go."

Unke bowed low and smiled, backing away from the door, and waving the others back with his extended arms, as he vanished slowly out of sight, but scarcely out of ear-shot. The amma alone remained. He had groped his way quite near to Overton and stood, listening intently. Maud glanced at him strangely, but turned again to Hallard.

"Now, Jack, please tell us who this young girl is?"

Hallard looked at the Ambassador's dark face

and caught the fierce challenge in his eyes. He threw back his head.

"That is a painful matter, Maud," he said gravely; "better leave it as it is!"

Again Overton laughed. "It's a geisha girl, Maud, and he'll hardly care to go into further particulars. She came here after him; he knows why, beyond a doubt!"

But for De Freece and Dean, Hallard would have flown at his throat. "By heaven, sir, this is too much!" he cried.

"Be still!" De Freece urged. "Consider Miss Overton, remember your own position, your —"

"Shut up, Arthur!" Hallard retorted bluntly; "I will not be still —"

"My dear boy!" cried Dean reproachfully.

"I will speak!" Hallard retorted with passion. "I will defend this innocent girl from his aspersion. He, of all men, should be ashamed to speak so of her, for he is her father!"

There was a terrible silence.

At last Maud laid her hand on Jack's arm. "Jack," she said gravely, "you are fearfully angry; be careful! This is a terrible accusation. Can you confirm it?"

Hallard pointed at Overton. "Ask him to deny it!"

The Ambassador, dark with anger, faced them in sullen silence.

Umè suddenly sank on her knees, raising her

delicate hands to Overton. "Forgiv' him, Augustness, it is my fault — let him go, let him go free. I, even I, am miserably to blame!"

Hallard was deeply angered and touched. "Umè, stand up! You're not to blame." He turned to the others: "Maud, Dean, De Freece, all of you, I mean to tell you the exact truth. This young girl, O Umè, and her brother, Masamitsu, are the children of the Ambassador by a Japanese woman, whom he married twenty-two years ago, just after Maud's mother died. He forsook her, and she died in poverty. Her children were brought up in poverty by an aunt at Horiuchi. She, because they were so desperately poor, finally sold Umè's services, as a dancing-girl, to Owannon at the Garden of the Dragon at Kanagawa. Then, because, as I believe, Owannon blackmailed him, the Ambassador has conspired with her to force Umè into the oblivion of marriage, or concubinage, God knows which, with Prince Kojiro, a very cruel man. Not knowing all, I tried to buy Umè's freedom; I meant to buy it, for the girl is innocent as a child. But, while I was here yesterday, Owannon and Saigo and Inouyé carried her off to Kojiro. By God's mercy she escaped, and, like a child, because she is innocent and without knowledge of the world, she came here to me, her only friend, for help. Maud, you are a good woman; to you I swear that the girl is as innocent of wrong as

you are, and she is your father's daughter by his second marriage."

Overton choked with fury. "You'll have to prove that marriage!" he sneered.

"It is his, it is his!" cried the blind amma.

There was a general start of intense surprise, and all eyes turned on the Japanese. Inch by inch he had groped his way to the Ambassador and now they stood face to face. Overton suddenly whitened to the lips; the sightless eyes of the blind man were apparently fixed upon him, the long brown fingers pointed.

"It is Overton Sama!" The amma's blue-clad figure seemed to tower. "O Umè!" he called, "O Umè San, come hither. Many years have I waited, patiently have I watched for him, the barbarian, who is thy father. They told me of the returning, yet I believed not! As the thirsty man believes not when he hears first the waterfall laugh and mock him! Honorably he returns as the Koshi Sama! Umè, lo! I follow, patiently in Kōji-machi. I play long upon my reeds; o jo san, it is your father; your blessed mother was married to him. I—I, Yumoto Toba, before the great darkness came on me, I was with them, I—"

"Silence!" thundered the Ambassador, touching the bell.

"As the gods live," said the blind amma solemnly, "it is true."

Unke came to the door, bowing, miraculously close at hand.

"Unke," said the Ambassador, "send the constable, and have this blind begging lunatic taken to jail."

Umè uttered a wild cry. "No, no!" she sobbed; "he is my friend; when I was miserably friendless, alone, he, Yumoto, was all to us. Augustness, father!" she prostrated herself at Overton's feet.

Dean went quietly up to the blind amma and took his groping hand. "Your Excellency, I will see him outside the compound," he said, and gently pushed the amma to the door.

Umè still knelt; her flowerlike face was white, tears shone in her eyes. "Ottottsama!" she sobbed.

Overton was furious; he stamped his foot. "Go!" he shouted, "go, I tell you!"

Again De Freece threw his long arms around Hallard, who struggled.

Maud hesitated a moment, only a moment, her face turning from red to white. Then she went over and lifted the weeping girl in her arms. "Poor Umè!" she said pitifully, "poor little Umè, I'm your friend."

"Maud!" thundered the Ambassador, "let that creature go; I'll not have her here a moment longer. You hear me?"

Maud straightened herself superbly, her strong

arm supporting Umè's drooping little figure, the long gray sleeves trailing against her light evening gown, "I hear you, father," she replied quietly, "and I pity this poor girl, my — my sister!"

"God bless you, Maud!" said Jack devoutly.

Overton's rage passed all bounds, and, at that moment, Unke bowed in the British constables, the two representatives of the law who usually dozed happily inside the compound, or caught fish in the nearest river.

The Ambassador controlled himself. "Bateman," he said to the older officer, "handcuff Lieutenant Hallard and shut him up in the Chancery under guard until further orders."

"Your Excellency!" De Freece protested, "permit me —"

"Silence!" stormed the Ambassador; then to the officers: "Obey your orders."

Very reluctantly, the gray-haired sergeant produced the handcuffs and advanced toward Hallard. Jack put De Freece aside.

"I submit to arrest, sir; the handcuffs are unnecessary."

"Handcuff him!" repeated Overton.

Bateman snapped the irons on Hallard's wrists. The young man's face was ashen but he held his head high.

"Father!" cried Maud.

Umè slipped from her arms and ran to Jack, clinging to him with tears.

"Remove the prisoner!" the Ambassador commanded sharply.

"One moment, your Excellency," said Hallard with dignity. "I've submitted to arrest; you're my superior officer and I realize the nature of my offense and its penalties." Then he turned to Maud. "To you," he said, with feeling, "I owe the humblest apology. Our engagement was a mistake. I've not been worthy of your kindness to me to-night and —" his voice softened — "to Umè. Forgive me, Maud, for old time's sake, for the true friendship I bear to you, for —"

She interrupted him. "Jack, it was all a mistake; you and I are true friends and comrades. There is no engagement between us. I had intended to tell you, but I shirked. To-night I publicly release you. You know —" she colored deeply — "how I feel these irons; they shame me!"

"No!" cried Umè, suddenly recovering herself, her small face pale and lovely, "not you they shame, o jo san, but Umè. It is my coming here thad ruin him lig thad. I ver' sorry, ver' grieved. But I —" she broke down, and tears rained down her face — "I gladly suffer instead — if Augustness permit! For I —" she looked up at Jack with beautiful eyes — "I love him!"

"Not more than I do you, Umè!" he answered. "Dry your tears. I will come back, I will marry

you, Umè. The Ambassador, nor the world, cannot prevent it!"

"Let me go — with you!" she cried pitifully. "Chain my hands lig thad, Augustness; let me suffer too, let me suffer for him!"

The Ambassador's fury rose again; he was goaded beyond endurance. "Remove the prisoner!" he thundered.

The sergeant turned to lay a reluctant hand on Hallard, but met his eye and stopped.

"I go, sir," Jack said to Overton, and with one look at Umè he walked out ahead of his two guards.

Maud swayed slightly and caught at a chair. Arthur de Freece sprang to her side, and their eyes met. "Maud!" he cried, below his breath.

She smiled, faintly and sadly, but very sweetly, and gave him her hand. It was but an instant, but his face flushed. He looked no longer homely and awkward, and a great light shone in his kindly, honest eyes.

The Ambassador saw only Umè. The girl was alone, kneeling, her head bowed on the table, her face hidden in her sleeves. Overton stared at her in bitter rage; to him she embodied all the mortification, the harrying, the worry of months and years. He hated her. He turned to Unke, pointing at the slender gray figure.

"Put that girl outside the gates," he ordered; "turn her into the streets at once!"

Maud heard him; she dragged her hand away from De Freece and, crossing the room, put her arms around Umè again. Then she raised a pale face to her father. They measured strength.

"Father!" said the girl passionately, "how can you? My sister shall not be turned into the streets. I am a woman, too! To-night I will protect her. To-morrow she'll find friends. Father, in God's name, think!"

For one long moment they continued to measure strength, then the Ambassador turned, violently angry still, but half ashamed.

"Have your way!" he said bitterly, "to-night, but no longer. You've had enough to regret already; you'll have more! Unke, a lantern. I'll see that the prisoner is secure and the guards on duty. Lieutenant de Freece, see that the gates of the compound are closed on these noisy beggars!" he added, as he passed them, followed by Unke, who carried a red lantern.

At the door the Ambassador turned and looked back. The tempest in his soul had torn its way to the primitive rock of the man's violent nature, but a strange expression came over his face as he looked. Maud, in her lovely evening gown, pale but very noble looking, held the graceful gray-clad figure in her arms, and against her shoulder lay Umè's unconscious face.

XVII

L EFT alone with Umè, Maud laid the young girl gently down, and, reaching for a sofa pillow, thrust it under her head.

The brilliant lights on the table fell on the beautiful soft outlines of the unconscious face and illumined its rare charm. The older girl knelt and looked at her long and earnestly. She felt the subtle beauty, the childish innocence of the young stranger, and she searched her face for a likeness, however faint, to her father's people. She fancied it was there, as the English blood was surely there in the pure whiteness of the skin, the soft thick lashes, the warm tints of the wonderful luxuriant hair. But the subtle spell of the East was there, too, the budding loveliness of another race. The little half-caste had a charm as wonderful as it was dangerous. Dangerous for her, poor child, as Maud, with her greater knowledge of the world, saw at a glance.

Her half-sister! The proud English girl recoiled from the thought of the hidden marriage, the deserted Japanese wife, the two forlorn children. Her own mortification had been bitter; she had not loved Jack Hallard, but she had a

woman's natural pride, and it hurt her to feel how little he had ever considered her. Then the thought of Arthur de Freece, his honest, unspoken, but apparent devotion, of his joy that night, came to her with healing balm. At least, he had always loved her! While this poor child whom Jack loved — Maud's face softened; fate had been very cruel to little O Umè San.

The English girl rose and went for one of the wonderful Japanese fans, with Fuji's sacred peak amid encircling storks. She came back and gently fanned the unconscious Umè. She loosened the folds of soft white at the delicate throat; she straightened out the small crumpled hands.

A shiver passed over Umè; she sighed faintly and opened her eyes. The room swam in light. She struggled to sit up and Maud half raised her. "I do not dislig the word," she said, in a faint voice, her mind still bewildered, "the word you honorably — teach — I — it is lofe!"

Maud drew back sharply, with a flushed face. Umè sat up; consciousness had come fully, and she wrung her hands. "Kwannon hav' mercy!" she said. "I thought — I dream — and I awake — lig I was! I —" she sobbed — "I hav' ruin him!"

"No, no, let us hope not!" comforted Maud kindly. "Don't give way so, Umè; it doesn't help, and he may need our help to-night."

Umè raised a tear-stained face, catching Maud's

arm with trembling hands. "Can I — I help too, o jo san? Let me — let me suffer for him; it is me thad is wrong — ver' wrong! You will tell august Koshi Sama? Put me in prison lig you hav' him, eh?"

Maud took the little cold hands in hers. "Listen, Umè; I haven't put him in prison. I had nothing to do with it. I am indeed o jo san, the honorable young lady of the house, but I have no more power than you have. Jack Hallard struck his superior officer, his Chief, Umè, and that is an offense, a very grave offense. He will probably be dismissed from the army; he will certainly lose his place here, but he won't be killed, or receive any bodily injury. It's his honor that has suffered; can you understand, Umè?"

Umè sank slowly down on the floor, half reclining, in the easy native attitude; her gray kimono folded itself caressingly about her, her trembling hands vanished under her sleeves. Her face was pale.

"I understand — yes!" Her lip quivered ever so little. "I samurai. When samurai is hurt lig thad, o jo san, in his honor, so! then," her look was intense, grief-stricken, "then he kill himself."

Maud smiled sadly. "Mr. Hallard will not kill himself, Umè."

The Japanese girl shivered, and her expression was infinitely childish and pathetic. "It is me

— I do it all! ” she said, in her low sweet voice. “ August Koshi Sama mad with me becaus’ I come here, o jo san.” She added gently: “ In your country is it — do the girl not go to — I came here to see Jash — to see Hallard Sama — and I — I tell you all here I lofe him — is thad wrong, o jo san? ”

Maud put her arm around her. “ Umè, to you I’m not the honorable young lady of the house, I am Maud. Can you say Maud? ”

Umè looked up at her, at first fearfully, then meeting the other girl’s clear eyes, her face changed, she flung herself into her arms. “ You lig beau-ti-ful chrysanthemum, big and white and pink. I call you ‘ Kiku — O Kiku! ’ ”

“ Lady Chrysanthemum? I like it, Umè.” Maud smiled. “ No, Umè, we don’t usually go to see gentlemen in England; we don’t, as a rule, tell them we love them before a circle of their friends and enemies, but circumstances alter cases. I think yours is unique, little Umè.”

“ Never-r, never-r in Nippon we say ‘ lofe,’ ” said Umè.

“ But you said it! ”

“ He condescended to teach,” Umè explained, a soft pretty color going up from chin to brow, her long eyes infinitely tender. “ I try to learn.”

Maud smiled involuntarily. “ It’s a lesson some of us are sorry to have learned,” she remarked quietly.

"Eh?" Umè looked up quickly; her hands trembled. "You thing I sorry becaus' I learn, O Kiku San? I—" she hung her head—"kaimaimasen—matters not if I be sorrowful—if if only he lofe me!"

Tears came into the English girl's eyes. "No, Umè, you will not be sorry. To you is given the supreme gift. We who love like that are not sorry. For a woman's love is supreme in its self-sacrifice."

"A woman's?" Umè's brows drew lightly together in a puzzled line. "Is it then thad a man not lofe lig us?"

Maud shook her head, smiling. "Not often, Umè; never quite as we do. It's different. When a woman loves as you do, Umè, she gives even her life without complaint. Oh, dear little Japanese sister, yes, you are my sister! Men very, very seldom feel like that!"

Umè clasped her hands on her knee, looking dreamily away. Then the light grew in her face. "I thing," she smiled tenderly, "yet I thing he lofe me!"

Maud patted her hand sadly. "I am sure he does, Umè, dear." But she was thinking gravely of the fearful climax to Hallard's idle love affair. Would he, indeed, be true to this poor child? Would he sacrifice place, social position, probably money, to marry Overton's disowned Japanese daughter? Yet, to break the beauty of this innocent devotion!

Umè dreamed on. "He deign to condescend," she said softly; "he lofe me, he teach me to speak lig you of lofe. He would not so condescend, if he did not lofe me, eh?"

"I'm sure he loves you now, Umè!"

Umè looked up into Maud's eyes, and smiled divinely. "I thing—I thing that is all we women lig to know, O Kiku San! Sō ja nai ka— isn't that so?"

Maud laughed now, with a blush as warm as Umè's. "I'm afraid it is, Umè. You're a little witch; I know now why Jack loves you!"

"Yes," Umè looked divine again, "he lofe me, I know thad here," she clasped her hands over her heart, "but not—not more than I lofe him!"

Maud was deeply touched. The girl's sweetness, her absolute devotion to Hallard, were convincing, and she was her own half-sister. The English girl felt the responsibility; if she could, she must protect her even from Hallard, unless he kept his faith and married her. She sat on the floor by Umè, holding her hand. The contrast between the two was striking. The strong, large, athletic English girl, with her white skin and smooth brown hair, and her low-cut evening gown of blue silk, and the mystic beauty of Umè, her gray, gold-threaded robes, her small delicate figure, her flowerlike face, her attitude, her gestures, the appeal of her soft voice.

Dean was struck with the picture as he entered. He came unannounced, his usually genial face clouded with trouble. Maud sent him a look of warning, but he did not seem to understand it.

"My dear Miss Overton, I can't tell you how sorry I am for it all," he said earnestly. "De Freece has just told me the end of the scene. He's with the Ambassador. Do you think your father would allow me to see Jack?"

Maud rose from the floor and came over to him. "No," she said, "and I wouldn't ask it. Mr. Dean, I want you to help us. We must get Jack Hallard out. No!" she saw Dean's glance at Umè, "I'm not engaged to him, you know. But I don't mean to have father's anger carry him beyond bounds, and it will. I know. I've got to get Jack away and I can't allow Mr. de Freece to be compromised. You've got to help me!"

"Oh!" said Dean blankly, "you've found a scapegoat, eh?"

She smiled. "You're a minister and that makes it respectable."

"My dear young lady, it makes it worse!"

"It doesn't matter in the least then; you've got to help!" She shook her finger at him. "Don't shirk, your reverence! Jack's got to go down to Yokohama and stay there until this blows over."

"Unfortunately, he struck the Ambassador," said Dean gravely.

"I can't help that! I know papa insulted him. Come, come, Mr. Dean, help me. You know what it means? Jack is ruined if he stays here now; he'll be disgraced and sent home. If I get him away, I'll work hard to save him. I will, indeed. It's not Christian not to help me!"

"You know how it tempts me," Dean said, with feeling. "I love Jack, and the whole thing makes me miserable; I'm afraid he's ruined."

Maud nodded gravely. "It looks so," she admitted. "Of course he'll have to give up his appointment here, and probably leave the Diplomatic Service, then that old uncle of his will leave his money to some one else. But we can't help it. We can get him out! Mr. Dean, I don't dare to face what will happen if he stays here! You don't know father. For heaven's sake, help me! Only remember he had Jack handcuffed — Jack!"

"Those are off," Dean assured her. "De Freece told me he got that order reversed. Jack is only locked up in the Chancery under guard. On my word, Miss Overton, I don't know how we'll get him out!"

Maud laughed softly. "You're mine!" she triumphed, "we'll do it. Trust a woman, trust two women!"

Umè, who had been listening with a white face, came over and knelt softly at Dean's feet. "Help us, condescend to help us," she prayed.

Dean raised her gently. "Of course I will," he said, almost tenderly.

"There!" said Maud, "I knew you'd do it for her — oh, the eternal man of it!"

He laughed good-humoredly. "Didn't I promise to do it for you first?"

"Oh, I couldn't get down on my knees and look like that to save my soul!" she retorted. "Umè would melt a brass monkey! But, dear me, I can do practical things! There's Pat, Hallard's man." She went to the window and called softly.

Pat heard her and came in on tiptoe, his face a yard long and even his red head subdued. He liked Maud Overton, but to-night he was in a mood to distrust his own grandmother. He saluted respectfully.

"Pat, I believe you love Mr. Hallard — I know you do," she added, seeing the indignant flash in his blue eyes, "and I'm going to trust you. Of course you know what's happened to-night; every one does, I'm afraid! Well, I'm going to help Mr. Hallard to escape, if I can. Who's on guard?"

"Bateman, miss." Pat eyed her with lingering suspicion.

"When will guards change?"

"Twelve o'clock, yer liddyship, I mane Miss Overton."

"Very good. It's nearly eleven. We've got

too little time. Who takes the next watch? Blake? "

" Yes, miss."

Maud turned to Dean. " He's a big good-natured fellow, but I suppose we couldn't corrupt him? "

Dean shook his head. " I can't bribe a man, Miss Overton, even for Jack."

Maud thought. Then she smiled at Pat and he melted visibly under her genial glance. " Pat, will Blake drink some beer? "

" Thry him, miss. He's six foot four an' dhry as punk, th' whole av him. Ye'll have to be givin' him a couple av buckets ter moisten him up, sure! "

Maud went swiftly to a little cabinet in the corner, and began to search the drawers, unlocking one after the other.

Umè had followed, and stood watching her, waiting apparently to help.

Dean turned to Maloney. " Pat, I'm cut to the heart about your master. We'll try to get him to Yokohama until the Ambassador cools down. If we could only trust the Japanese servants — what do you think? "

Pat shrugged his shoulders. " Haythens, sorr, haythens," he replied calmly. " I'd be afther suspicioning the best av 'em, whin they grins and rubs their hands so! " He gave a practical illustration. " Yir rivirince, they haven't enny

morals. Hinry the Aighth would have had ter use a fan. He couldn't have looked at 'em whin it turns hot! Wan wife ain't in it, nor twinty-wan."

Dean smiled involuntarily. "I'm afraid you're a pessimist, Maloney; you've evidently seen the seamy side."

"Yir rivirince, I don't have ter go out av th' compound ter blush loike a gurl. Only to-night, sorr, I opened th' door inter th' courtyard, an' th' bath-tub was smokin', and out av it stips the cook's grandmither, jist as the Lord made her, only oulder and a dale skinnier. Says I, waving me hat: 'Ould Liddy San, git back, git back quick! I'm a dacent, modest, rispictable, married man,' says I, 'an' ye make me blush ter look at ye, so that I can't see out av me eyes!' Lord love ye, sorr, she jist bowed an' smiled an' skipped away loike a lamb. What was I, sorr? Naything, naything but a barbarian San in me clothes, I — "

"Pat," said Maud, coming back, "here is a very harmless sleeping powder that my father had to take when he was so ill last summer. Put some in Blake's beer. He'll go to sleep almost at once and — can you get the key then? "

Maloney looked at her and slowly closed one eye; it was a wink that spoke from soul to soul. "You trust me, miss!" he said gently; "I'll get the kay if I have ter rip 'im open."

"For heaven's sake!" she laughed in spite of

herself; "indeed, Maloney, it's a matter of the gravest import. If we let Mr. Hallard out, how can you two get out of the compound without being seen?"

Dean interposed. "Miss Overton, the boy, Masamitsu —" he hesitated and colored — "O Umè San's brother, is at the gate. I quieted him with the assurance that we would care for her to-night. Perhaps he could help."

Maud turned. "Would he, Umè?"

"Condescend to ask," she replied gently, and then earnestly, "surely, O Kiku San, he also will serve Hallard Sama."

"I will speak to him," said Dean; "we'd better not risk him inside the compound. Pat, what sort of a man is Bateman? Will he give us trouble off guard?"

Pat shook his head. "No, sorr, Bateman is queer in his hat; he ain't aisy, he's English, and most av 'em is queer in their hats, savin' yer prisince. But he'll git ter bid afther he gits off guard, sorr. If he don't, I'll take him there, sure, an' tuck 'im up loike his mither."

Umè laid a hand on Maud's arm. "O Kiku," she said softly, "Masamitsu will bring Japanese dress for Hallard Sama."

"Good!" said Dean, "she's solved it. Can he — two dresses, Miss Umè?"

She brightened. "Yes, two — three — any you honorably need!"

"Come, Pat," said Dean, "we'll get them. Miss Maud, you've made me a conspirator!"

She held out a frank hand. "How can I thank you? But, you know it spells ruin for poor Jack."

Dean clasped her hand and wrung it warmly. "I'm going to help you, I must! Poor Jack, you've been solidly good to him, Miss Overton."

She blushed and glanced at Umè. "She loves him," she said softly. "I do it for her too, my — my sister!"

"God bless you!" said Dean heartily; "you're fine!"

When they were alone, Umè came to Maud again and laid her trembling hands on her arm. "I heard," she said quietly, "I heard all you honorably say to — to the big man, the —"

"To Mr. Dean? He's a minister, Umè, a priest, you understand? Chaplain on one of our big war-ships at Yokohama. He loves Jack. Come, little sister, you must go to bed; you're worn out, tired to death, and your presence here will only lead to watchfulness. Trust us to do what is right. You can't see Jack again to-night. Father might catch us and spoil it all. I've got a little nest up-stairs for you to-night. Come!"

"One moment — only one moment, O Kiku." Umè's wonderful eyes never left Maud's face. "You say to Mr. Dean Sama thad — thad Jash is ruin, he lose money, place, everything, he ruin lig — lig poor man, eh?"

Maud hesitated, then she spoke truthfully. "I'm afraid, Umè, that Jack will lose his place here, his commission in the army, and, by that disgrace, a good deal of money, but — but, well, we can get him away to-night, I think. Let's hope for the best."

"Yes, let's hope for the bes'." Umè's face paled perceptibly; if it had been white before, it was now ashen. "And if I had not come — if he not lose me — then it is not so? Tell me, oh, tell me true, O Kiku San?"

"We won't even think of that," said Maud kindly, slipping a sympathetic arm around the drooping little figure.

"Yes, but condescend to tell me, O Kiku!" Umè's eyes still searched the other girl's changing face. "But for me — this not happen, he gives up all — all that he is — for me, becaus' he lose me?"

Maud did not quite follow her thought; she fancied that Umè took it as a further proof of his love for her. In that light it seemed less noble to the English girl.

"Yes, for your sake, Umè, he has sacrificed himself and his career. Will that prove his love?"

Umè looked dreamily into space; then a great light dawned. "It is to show this love that one sacrifice?" she asked softly. "Wakarimashita — I understand! And if I not here had come, he had remain so as he was before? Yes, I know!

If I go out of his life so, becaus' I lofe him, then I — Umè-ko, I also, do profe thad I lofe him! It is so, O Kiku San?" she clasped her hands against her breast. "Kwannon hav' mercy!" she breathed, with closed eyes, and then softly: "I lofe you, Jash!"

Maud drew her away. "Come, Umè, come, you're tired, you'll feel better to-morrow; to-night you stay safe with me, with Lady Chrysanthemum, eh?" she tried to be cheerful.

Umè smiled gently and slipped her hand into hers. "Greatly honorable help you hav' given," she said, and she let Maud lead her away, but in her eyes was a great light, a revealing light.

Her soul had accepted its sacrifice, but she made no sign.

XVIII

IT was nearly midnight when the Ambassador rang again for Unke. Maud, who was listening and watching in her room, was filled with deep concern. If he stayed up all night!

But the Ambassador was not thinking of Hallard, safe, as he supposed, in the Chancery. He was walking up and down the empty dining-room with every evidence of anger and impatience.

Unke appeared, a little pale but smiling.

"Where is the kurumaya?" the Ambassador demanded sharply; "where is Inouyé? I sent for him two hours ago; as soon as you told me he had been here this evening."

Unke bowed low. "Have been, Augustness," he said mildly. "Inouyé waiting here one hour to see Koshi Sama."

"Why the devil didn't you tell me before?" exclaimed Overton angrily. "Stop grinning and mind your business; send Inouyé here double quick."

Unke smiled and bowed meekly, rubbing his knees, as he backed to the door.

"Double quick, do you hear?" shouted the Ambassador.

Unke disappeared, still bowing almost to the ground.

Overton moved uneasily about the room, touching first one object and then another with restless angry fingers. His face had darkened and completely changed in the last few hours; he looked like a man at bay, fierce, resentful, relentless. His patience was almost at the limit when the door opened and Inouyé appeared, very humble, very cringing, very dangerous in his crawling secret way.

The Ambassador turned on him furiously; here was a slave that might well be the butt of his anger.

"You blackmailing hound," he said violently, "how dare you take my money and betray me? Didn't I pay you and that yellow devil, Saigo, to keep the girl, Umè San, out of my way, to marry her off to Kojiro? Instead, you turn her loose here in the compound, blow the story to the four winds of heaven, and entangle a young Englishman in your toils! Damn you, hanging's too good for you!"

Inouyé prostrated himself and rubbed his bristling black head on the floor. "To forgive condescend," he whined. "I, myself, delivered the girl to Kojiro. Ignorant am I how she escape. Condescend to listen!"

"Augustly damn you!" said Overton. "I don't believe a word of it! Kojiro had nothing to do with it; you're using her to squeeze hush money out of me, but you've over-reached yourselves. I paid to have her kept out of the way, not turned loose here at the Embassy."

Inouyé grovelled. "As the gods live, Augustness, I left her safe at the house of Kojiro. Traitors within he must have; horribly he has visited his anger upon us. Let me but have O Umè San, let me but take her again to the great Prince Kojiro, very surely she escape not. That do I swear by the Lord of Death!"

Overton paced to and fro. There was a struggle in his dark soul. The beauty of Umè, her childishness, and something more, perhaps the indefinable call of his own blood, had touched him. He had to set his face to his task, he had to remember all that open disgrace would mean to him, to strengthen his own heart against itself. He glanced at the hideous cringing kurumaya with a new and keen disgust.

"I no longer trust you," he said bitterly; "you've betrayed me once, you'll betray me again."

"Condescend to try your servant," whimpered Inouyé; "condescend to believe what I have told! Kojiro waits for O Umè San; he commands me to find her."

Overton curbed his fury; some hidden in-

instinct of his blood restrained him, made him pause to think. An impulse of heredity touched his callous conscience. He would be a monster to throw the girl among these creatures, but the sight of her recalled a period of his life that burned his conscience like hot iron. He must be rid of her, but it pleased him to think that he did well to marry her to a great dignitary, a daimyō. He was acting a father's part to make her a princess, and he was ridding himself of her, both at one stroke. Inouyé was vile, but he was only an instrument to an end. He stirred the blue heap of the kurumaya with his foot.

"Listen to me," he said sharply, "the girl, Umè San, sleeps in a room over there, opening on the upper veranda. The household is in bed; when I put out the light here and raise that bamboo blind, I will leave the window open. When all is still, creep in here and go up-stairs. You can enter her room from the veranda, seize her and carry her off, and I'll see that you get out without hindrance. Take her at once to Kojiro, see her married to him, and bring me proof of it. Then I will pay you the promised money — more, I'll add a hundred ryō for to-night's work."

Inouyé prostrated himself again. "Greatly honorable help you give, Augustness. To-morrow Kojiro marries O Umè San."

"See that he does," said Overton harshly,

"and remember that the British Koshi Sama's arm is long."

Inouyé rose humbly, rubbing his knees.

"Go!" said Overton sharply, "watch the bamboo blind."

"Augustness humbly is obeyed," said Inouyé, backing.

He backed completely and adroitly out of the room, and, by doing it, missed a discovery. He passed close, so close that their garments touched, to Pat Maloney, who was flattened against the wall outside the door. Pat watched the crooked figure disappear into the garden, then he breathed more freely.

"Begorra!" he said softly to himself, "for a mon with a tinder conscience, loike mine, this is a very compromising position, but the ind justifies the manes!" and he sighed deeply.

The Ambassador, still restless, wandered into the hall. He had reached up to extinguish the lights there, when he discovered Maud, huddled in a corner of the wide staircase, a flowered kimono hastily thrown on, and her long hair floating over her shoulders. Overton's hand dropped to his side.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded harshly.

"I can't sleep," she replied, avoiding his eye. He had never had her affection; now her mind reeled back from this new revelation of him.

He stood regarding her, his anger rising as he recalled the part she had played in the little drama. "You made a pretty scene to-night," he said, "and a wise move to keep that girl here in the house for Hallard to see again."

Maud looked at him, a slow blush staining her pale cheeks with crimson. "You said she was my — my half-sister."

"Never mind what I said. If it had been a situation of my seeking would I have hidden her away? You've made a pretty mess of your own affairs. You've got to marry Hallard anyway; why do you want to throw that girl at his head?"

Maud rose; stretching out her hand blindly, she caught the banisters and held to them. "I haven't a thought of marrying Jack."

Her father was furious again. A thousand complications pressed on him; in a glimpse he saw the loss of Hallard's money, and his own debts to him. "You'll marry him all the same, young lady!"

Maud whitened again. "I'm an English girl, father, not a Japanese."

"You'll obey me all the same."

"Do you really think, after to-night, I'd marry Jack? Gracious heavens, no! I never really loved him, I —"

"Fol-de-la-rol!" screamed the angry colonel, "love be damned! You're engaged to him; he's

got what you haven't got, my girl, and I be damned if you don't marry him!"

She looked her scorn. "After he struck you?"
"Silence!"

She was a little frightened, but she held her ground. "You must think me fallen very low," she said; "he told you all to-night that he loved Umè. Do you think that I, that any decent girl, would marry a man who had declared his love for another woman? Thank you, no!"

"By God, this is too much!" Overton swung around and paced the hall.

The clock struck twelve; Maud's heart quaked. Guards were changing at the Chancery. Her father came to the foot of the stairs; his eyes were only a little below the level of hers, as she stood three steps above him.

"Maud, I'm a ruined man," he said bitterly; "my affairs are in a hopeless tangle. I'm head over ears in debt to the Hallards. If you marry Jack they'll let me off; if they don't — well," he laughed, "you'll see where you are!"

Maud looked at him steadily, and even her lips were white. "So!" she said coldly, "you are willing to sell *both* your daughters?"

The colonel raised his hand violently; he was almost ready to fell her to the earth, but she evaded him, retreating up-stairs. From the landing she looked back at him.

"I will never marry Hallard," she said firmly.

"You might kill me, but you can never sell me, sir!"

"By God, I would — and cheap!" he cried, beside himself.

"May God forgive you," said the girl. "I — I can't!" And she ran up-stairs, weeping.

Overton stood a moment as if turned to stone, then he cursed deeply under his breath, put out the lights, walked back to the dining-room, paused there one supreme moment, then deliberately closed all the windows but one, and at that he raised the bamboo screen.

Three minutes later he had put out all the lights and locked himself in his own room, which was, that night, another hell to him.

XIX

IT was a little past midnight; a light still burned in the upper corridor, but the house was very still. Sleep seemed to have wiped out the last few hours of grief, revelation and disgrace. The crimson berries on the Heavenly Bamboo trembled; the night wind had risen from the bay and the draught came down from the open windows above stairs. Rain came not; it was the beginning of the great drought, and the wind was dry, hot, irritating. Tokyo, with its river and its canals and its flat-roofed temples, slept. To the west the sacred mountain pierced the clouds, a sublime peak.

In the stillness of the Embassy the lightest sound reached far. A door creaked softly, a light step came slowly and timidly to the stairs. The slight gray figure seemed but a shadow from the shadows, the flower face was white, the eyes dark-ringed, wide with misery. Umè had struggled hard, prayed hard, alone in the darkness. From the struggle her young soul had risen purified to its supremest sacrifice. Softly, her hand pressed against her heart, she came down, a step at a time. The darkness of the hall below be-

wildered her, but she groped her way; then the moonlight suddenly guided her.

The door into the dining-room was open and there a bamboo screen was lifted. The broad moonlight guided Umè, as a star might have led her in the night. Her heart trembled. The room was unchanged, it was revealed in splendid light and shadow; there was the chair where Hallard sat to teach her to use knife and fork. She touched it with trembling fingers, stooped and pressed her soft cheek against the insensible wood.

"Jash," she murmured softly, in her sweet English, "forgiv' — I lofe lig you told me — I go — for your sake!"

Then a low sob choked her; she dropped on her knees and hid her face in her gray sleeves. She would never see him again! The keen pain of bereavement pierced her to the soul.

"It is so! Condescend to believe, Superiority," she murmured, as if he heard her; "for lit' Umè you may not ruin yourself so! I ver' sorry I come. I did not understand. For I — I lofe you!" The small figure quivered, as she lay, half prostrate across the chair, her long sleeves trailing on the floor. She prayed brokenly, with tears, to the gods. "Kwannon, have mercy!" she sobbed pitifully. "Kwannon, give strength. Little Umè is broken, as the reeds break in the wind. Kwannon, have mercy!"

She hid her face, the passion of her grief shut-

ting out sight and sound. She would never see him again! She was friendless, alone, desolate, and she would rather die than do that which she was about to do for him!

Inouyé, obeying the Ambassador's instructions, slipped softly over the sill of the open window; then he stood still, amazed. In the moonlight he saw very plainly the prostrate gray figure. Fate had delivered Umè into his hand. He grinned and put his long thin knife between his teeth, then he cautiously uncoiled the loops of his bamboo rope. He did not even hurry, and his hideously deformed figure cast a hideous black shadow before it. He crept noiselessly, crouched to spring, and waited.

Still Umè wept.

"Jash," she whispered softly, "becaus' I lofe you — sayonara!"

Unseen by either of them, a third figure grew out of the darkness and moved along the side wall toward Inouyé.

The kurumaya sprang.

Umè uttered but one faint cry. Inouyé's hand was over her lips, his rope had slipped down in a noose over her arms. She struggled.

"Be still!" he muttered, "or —"

A sudden blow on the head prostrated him, almost over Umè. Inouyé rolled over on one side and tried to struggle, but Mr. Maloney had him firmly by the throat.

"Be quiet, you squint-eyed divil!" he said, in a low but eloquent tone; "if ye don't hold yer tongue I'll be afther stuffing a sofy piller in yer mouth. Thire now, aisy-loike; I've got ye, me darlint. If ye ain't as pritty a chromo av a toad as iver I saw!" and Mr. Maloney proceeded to tie Inouyé with a piece of his own rope and to stuff a bit of his blue shirt, unceremoniously detached, into his mouth.

Inouyé rolled over again, writhing with rage but helpless. Pat turned his attention now to Umè; very gently he loosed her half-fastened bonds and helped her to her feet.

"Be ye hurt, miss? Jist say the word and I'll pound him ter a jilly."

Umè tottered for a moment, clinging to the big Irishman's kindly hand, then she straightened herself.

"I am thankful," she said gently. "He —" she shuddered and looked down at Inouyé's fearful face and glittering eyes, "greatly I fear!"

"The yellow divil!" Pat eyed his adversary fiercely. "Be quiet, ye squint-eyed spalpeen, ye! Ye'd betther go to bid, miss. I've got ter heft the divil out av the compound, horns and hoofs and all. It's pritty early for young liddies ter be down-stairs."

Umè clasped her hands under her sleeves. "I go," she said gently; "help me, I must go!"

Pat's amazement was great. "Ye go? Holy Smoke, where'd ye go now, miss? It won't be light for a bit, an' these squint-eyed divils is loose. Besides, Misther Hallard —"

Umè looked at him imploringly. "He is safe? You will surely get him out?"

Pat rubbed his head thoughtfully, and the red hair stood up in straight aggressive bristles. "Sure, miss, I'm jist waitin' fer the beer ter soak inter Misther Blake, miss. He ain't as loively as he was. Sure, he's afther gaping so!" Mr. Maloney gaped terrifically. "And he's kinder stoopid, but, the Lord love ye, miss, thire's a lot av the divil in him yit. Betwane you and me, miss, an Englishmon is liable ter be terrible hard-headed. Give an Irish gintlemon a drap av whiskey, miss, an' he's happy, he's yer friend, he'll go ter slape on yer shoulder. But," Pat sighed, "it ain't so with the English; they're what ye moight call slow ter come up ter the scratch!"

Poor little Umè looked at him hopelessly; the flow of Mr. Maloney's eloquence made no impression. She had but one thought. "I go," she said simply, unclasping the gold cord of her obi-dome; "will you giv' Hallard Sama this? This from O Umè San, and — and say to him, 'sayonara!'"

Pat took the golden cord gingerly. "See here, miss, I can't let ye go. Ye ain't safe alone in this

quarther in the night. Wait fer Miss Maud now, she's a rale liddy."

The clock struck one, and they both started guiltily.

Umè clasped imploring hands. "Go!" she prayed, "let Hallard Sama out, the key — the key!"

"Sure, miss, ye're right!" Pat looked perplexed at Inouyé; "you stay here, miss, and watch the yellow divil. I'll be back with Misther Hallard an' he'll know what ter do with ye. Hist! not a sound!" He held up a warning finger, stooped, and, tightening Inouyé's bonds, was gone in a moment out of the window.

Umè watched him go, then she gave one horrified look at Inouyé, fierce and speechless. His terrible oblique eyes seemed to follow her like two knife points dipped in deadly venom. But she forgot him, as she turned and looked at the room. The broad moonlight fell across it, touching every object with glory, but black shadows lurked in the corners. The girl stood quite still, her hands clasped against her breast.

"Sayonara!" she said softly, to the room, to the great silent house. "Sayonara, O Kiku San! Kwannon be merciful to you, you who were augustly good to the stranger. Sayonara, august, but terrible father, little Umè troubles you no more. And you —" tears slipped down her white cheeks — "Jash, sayonara! Forget me

— forget Umè-ko, ver' sorry am I to hav' hurt you, Superiority, to you now lit' Umè giv' her life — sayonara! ”

She knelt and touched Jack's chair, then she rose and touching her lips with a gesture of farewell that he had taught her, she slipped softly out of the window and vanished into the moonlight and shadows of the Embassy garden.

The dry, hot wind rustled the bamboo screens, but the house was profoundly silent. Inouyé, who had lain still so long, turned on his side, writhing and wriggling toward the window. He tried to cry out but choked horribly; his face was deeply purple, his eyes glittered like the eyes of a snake. Like a snake he wriggled on the floor and made no sound.

XX

NEARLY half an hour had elapsed when Hallard followed Pat Maloney into the dining-room. The moon had set and in the dark they stumbled on Inouyé. Jack stopped and struck a match, saw the snake-like figure coiled under the window-sill and avoided it, just as Maloney turned on one light. They looked about the deserted dining-room. The ghost of last night's entertainment stared from the flower-decked table and the silver-laden sideboard. The chairs stood in disorder. The place smelt strongly of the grassy bamboo screens and the faded lotus flowers. Inouyé watched them, with unspeakable hatred in his beadlike eyes. Pat peered in every corner, then his honest freckled face went white.

"Begorra, she wint, sorr, whin she'd bè afther sittin' here as large as loife!"

"She must be here! Are you mad, man?" Jack, strangely garbed in Masamitsu's native robes, hurried to the door, and peered into the dark hall. "O Umè," he called softly, "O Umè San!"

No answer; he opened two other doors; darkness and silence. "She must have gone upstairs. Good heavens, Pat! Didn't you warn her to wait here?"

"I did, sorr," Pat was deeply troubled. "She's gone, yer honor."

"Gone?" Hallard swung around and glared at him.

Maloney choked. "Yer honor, she tould me she was goin', and I begged her to sthay till ye came. She gave me the cord I gave ye, sorr, and says she: 'till him, say-you-nary!'"

"My God!" Hallard was white as ashes. "Why didn't you tell me this before?"

"I thought she'd be afther sittin' here, yer honor, ter watch the sirpint, I mane the squint-eyed spalpeen thire. But, I doubt she's gone, sorr!"

Hallard hid his face in his hands. "I'll go mad between you all!" he cried. "How can I know the child went? I swear I won't budge till I do!"

"Thin, sorr, ye're ruined," said Maloney calmly. He had reached the limit of emotion, and he walked over and poured a glass of the Ambassador's wine. "Pardon me, yer honor; I'm all in, sorr, an' aboot ter collapse!"

Hallard stood thinking; he could not leave, even to save himself and the Ambassador from open scandal, while there was any doubt about

Umè. He could not believe that she had left the shelter of the Embassy, run away from him, just at the moment when reunion seemed so near. Umè, as she really was, the little samurai maiden, he did not yet realize. No conception of her thought, her motive, her discovery of the injury her love had brought him, entered his mind. That she was capable of immolating herself, soul and body, for his welfare, was, as yet, beyond the reach of his self-centered consciousness. He reasoned that she must have gone back to her room, afraid to be alone with Inouyé, even bound and gagged. But how to find out; who to trust with a message to her? He racked his brains and turned at last, with a wild idea, perhaps, of going up-stairs himself, when he saw a light coming down, and waited gladly, expecting her return.

But it was Maud, carrying a candle, and feeling her way cautiously, in noiseless slippers. At the sight of Hallard she suppressed a cry and came quickly on.

"Jack," she said tremulously, "Umè has gone!"

"Surely?" he groaned. "Maud, I hoped wildly she was with you, when we did not find her here!"

"Here?" Maud was bewildered.

Hallard told her briefly all Pat had told him.

"She must have crept down as soon as father

went to his room! Oh, heavens, Jack, where can she be?"

"God knows, Maud!" he groaned; "but I must find her."

Maud stood thinking; she had set her candle on the table but its thin light fell full on her fair kind face, her cloudy hair, the long straight folds of her kimono. She had never looked so sweet to Hallard, so entirely true and kind and sisterly.

"I fear, I greatly fear, she has gone back to them, her people," she said at last. "I remember now how she questioned me. She thought she'd injured you by coming here. I see it all now! She fancied her love had hurt you!"

"Good Lord!" Hallard's face grew haggard. "As if it mattered, while I had it, — the greatest gift in the world! The child is mad. Maud, help me; what shall I do?"

"Go!" she cried, laying her hand on his arm. "Get out of the compound, save a scandal! We'll find little Umè, trust me; she is my — my sister!"

He caught her hand and wrung it. "You've been good to me; I don't deserve it!"

She colored. "We came near making a terrible mistake, Jack," she replied gently; "I thank Heaven we didn't! Trust me to help you find Umè. Jack," she looked up earnestly, "you — you'll be good to her?"

"I'm going to make her my wife, Maud."

She smiled through her tears. "I believe I almost love you now, Jack!"

"If I could only find her!" He turned and saw Inouyé. In a moment he had the kuru-maya, shaking him, much as a terrier shakes a rat. "Where's O Umè San? Where is the house of that fiend, Kojiro?"

Inouyé made signs, he was still gagged.

"He can't tell, yer honor, he's chewin' the rag."

"He may know!" Maud suggested eagerly.

Jack Hallard bent down and removed the gag with no very gentle hand.

"Help!" screamed Inouyé; "murder! help, help!"

His cries pierced the morning air with clarion notes.

"Holy Virgin!" gasped Pat.

Hallard put back the gag. But it was too late; the Embassy was full of noises, doors slammed, windows went up.

"Go!" cried Maud wildly. "Oh, Jack, for Umè's sake, fly!"

"Right ye are, miss. Skip it is, yer honor!" said Maloney, tucking up the skirts of his gown; "pitticoats is inconvanyent!"

As he spoke the door was thrown open and Overton appeared on the threshold, carrying a heavy revolver. His daughter screamed.

"Father!"

"You here, Maud? Who are these three native gentlemen?"

Jack turned to answer, but Maloney's long arms were flung around him from behind. He struggled, but Pat was powerful.

"So!" said the Ambassador coolly, "thieves!"

He raised his weapon.

Maud flung herself between, catching his wrist. "Jack, for God's sake, go!" she cried.

There was a struggle in Hallard's mind, then Maud's danger prevailed, and he gave way to Maloney. They leaped out on the lawn.

It was nearly three o'clock in the morning, and the world lay in an impenetrable mist, gray as Umè's sleeves. Out of it, superb against the whitening sky, feathers of vapor curled about its knees, arose Fuji San. The way of the gods lay white in a river of cloud.

XXI

O TAKE, the divorced wife of Prince Kojiro, walked forlornly in his garden. She was carrying her baby girl on her back, like a peasant woman, and sometimes she crooned a lullaby. But it was a song as sad as tears.

The garden of Kojiro's house outside of Tokyo was surrounded by a high strong wall, and against the wall, on the inner side, was a hedge of orange-thorn, impenetrably cruel. The garden itself was planned in a curious fashion; there were little knolls and caves, and a miniature lake, where the gold fish flashed in the sun. There were curiously carved stone lanterns and strangely dwarfed fir trees and fantastic azaleas. But there was a shadow on it, the shadow of the low, quaint kat-chiū-yashiki, the old samurai residence, which Kojiro had taken from Nishida, O Takè's father. The shadow of the house now was the shadow of Kojiro, and it was cruel.

O Takè hushed the baby with a song. The children's song to the crows.

“Ato no karasu saki ine,
Ware ga iye ga yakeru ken!”

Her steps dragged; she came down beside the chodzu-bachi, the great rough granite water-basin, and stopped short; the crooning song died on her pale lips. She stood looking intently, but very calmly, at the young girl lying beside the dwarf fir, — a slender gray-clad figure lying on the little knoll. There was pathos in every line, childish abandon to grief. The face was hidden in the long gray sleeves, but the beautiful hair was touched with warm brown tints, instead of the intense blackness of Japan.

O Takè watched her, at first with something like doubt; then the sad pinched face softened, as she put up a slender hand and adjusted the swaddling bands that held her baby.

"Cease to weep," she said, in her plaintive voice. "Tears are lamentably frequent here, O Umè San; no one heeds them."

Umè turned her head languidly upon her arms; her flower face looked small and childish and appealing. It touched the older woman's heart.

"There is nothing else," Umè replied, "only to weep. O Takè, does it always hurt so when the heart breaks?"

O Takè nodded. "August ache here, O Umè," she said, clasping her thin blue-veined hands on her breast.

Umè sat up and pushed back the loose folds of her thick hair. She looked earnestly, questioningly at the ex-wife of Kojiro Hirata.

"O Takè," she said, "were you — were you ever in love?"

Poor O Takè, charged by her lord with infidelity, reddened deeply. "Terrible is it for young girls to talk of love," she said, and her lips trembled; "it is duty, not love, O Umè San."

But Umè still regarded her. Her young soul, great in its new and awful possession, was full of divining power.

"O Takè," she said, awe-stricken at her discovery, "you have also been in love!"

O Takè burst into tears.

Umè rose and twined her soft arms around her, clasping baby and all. "O Takè," she murmured softly, "forgive me! I meant no evil, elder sister. But my heart, because it is so full, my heart understands. Is it always so great pain to love, O Takè?"

O Takè sobbed. "I loved him," she said, "and my honorable father gave me to Kojiro."

Umè shuddered. "Tell me," she said gently, "I — I also understand!"

O Takè began to loosen the swaddling bands. Umè helped her, and together they nestled the baby very tenderly on the grassy knoll, kneeling worshipfully, one on each side of it, as women will. Umè caressed it and the baby laughed. O Takè knelt with clasped hands; her tears had dried, only her white face was drawn and pinched. She poured out the story, that had been locked

in her heavy heart, to which Umè's sympathy had furnished the golden key.

"When I was young, younger than you seem to be," O Takè said, in a low dull voice of misery, "I loved Ogura Yasu. Always we had known each other; we thought my father and his father meant us to wed; but it was not so! My father is of the clan of the great daimyō prince, Kojiro Hirata. Kojiro saw me; I was pretty then, O Umè San, as you are pretty; it is like a flower, the cruel wind of unkindness withers a woman's face! Yasu and I were hoping to be married, we were happy, out in the lovely fields, where the sakura trees were in bloom, and the wild doves called, called sweetly to each other, so spoke his heart to mine! Then my honorable father, who owed much in money to Kojiro, for we were poor, he called me and told me that I was promised to the prince."

Umè sobbed softly. "August fathers are always cruel, O Takè!"

O Takè shook her head. "Not always, O Umè San, but my father owed much to Kojiro. I never saw Yasu after that but once. I was married to the daimyō!" O Takè stopped; her lips were dry and white, she bent down and hid her face in the child's dress.

Umè stroked her hair gently; there was silence.

"He knew I hated him!" O Takè went on at last, raising her head. "He felt sure that I loved

some one, but the gods helped me, and I made no sign. Then he did a fearful thing, O Umè; he went to the priest and questioned him about poor O Takè, and the priest fell into a great trance, as they will, and one of my souls, passing into him, in the trance, miserably betrayed me. He, the priest, spoke with my soul and told Kojiro that I loved Ogura Yasu!"

Umè knelt, watching her, breathless, her hands clasped on her knee. "Can — can they take our souls into them while we live, O Takè?"

"Yea," replied O Takè, "he took my soul! Then Prince Kojiro, knowing of my love, ruined Ogura. He forced him from place to place, he harried him, and then he would tell me what he had done, and how Ogura suffered because I — I loved him. That my love had cursed Yasu! I tried to hide my pain, O Umè, for I knew, I knew we should all terribly suffer. But I am only a woman — and — and —" she broke down pitifully — "I loved! He saw it, the cruel wretch, and he insulted Yasu, when Yasu could not revenge the insult. Yasu was samurai; he committed the honorable seppuku."

Umè crept along the knoll and clasped the weeping Princess Kojiro in her arms. "Takè, elder sister!" she murmured.

"I loved him, and because of me he died!" sobbed Takè, and her blank face grew ashen and set with horror. "Because there was no son,"

she went on bitterly, at last, "because I am the mother only of a girl, and Kojiro had seen you, then he said I was unfaithful and divorced me. But my father will not submit; he cries out because I am innocent! And Kojiro has him bound now and in a dungeon yonder. He is old, he is poor, he is alone! And greatly he blames me, Takè, because I have no son so that Kojiro keep me!"

Umè shuddered. "Will not Kojiro let you go?"

She shook her head. "He thinks I would go to die, that my soul goes then to Yasu!" she said simply, "and he would take my child from me. I will die — but my baby!" She caught it up and smothered it with caresses, tears running down her cheeks. "It is all I have!" she sobbed. "Before it came, Umè, I feared, I greatly feared that I would hate it for Kojiro's sake, and I prayed to Hito-koto-Kwannon, Kwannon of the Single Grace, that I hate it not! But when it came," she smiled sweetly, "then I knew a mother cannot hate her own, Umè. I love it, I love it!"

Umè tried to comfort her. "See how pretty she is, Takè; see what lovely little pink toes she has!" She smiled, playing with the baby. "See — see, she is fond of me already!" she cooed, holding out her arms to the child.

But O Takè held the baby fiercely. "No, no!" she cried. "Toki is mine — mine!"

Umè smiled sadly. "I have nothing, O Takè," she said, "and I also love. O Takè," she hung her head, plucking at the grass with nervous fingers, "do you think the priest could take into him the soul of — of a barbarian?"

O Takè looked up across the baby, still caressing it. "I am miserably ignorant, O Umè, but I think that in the trance he might."

Umè clasped her hands, and a beautiful blush passed over her face. "Then — then I ask the priest if his soul still love me? Still, after I have run away to save him? If he loves me," she looked dreamily into the distant, splendid sky, "if he loves me still, I — I am not then so miserable!"

O Takè rocked the baby gently. "Yes," she assented drearily, "if you know — then it is less painful to endure."

But Umè did not seem to hear her; still she dreamed, with parted lips; her young soul seemed to have passed into a trance of bliss. It might yet be possible to know certainly if he still loved her! And Umè was a woman! O Takè's experience revealed to her an undreamed-of hope.

Yet, at that very moment, her fate threatened its darkest hour. Prince Kojiro had arrived from Yokohama with his retinue. A long line of jinrikishas entered the main gateway. It was secured behind him and he passed on into his

splendid house. With him were Inouyé and Saigo, cringing and humble, but persistent. Yokogi, still in charge of his attendants, marshaled them into the lower garden, far away from O Takè and Umè; there, behind the bamboo hedge, he harangued them long and earnestly, then, as they passed him, one by one, he handed each a dagger or a short terrible sword. There was no dispute; they went quietly to their posts, and Yokogi served saké and kuchi-tori and raw fish to Kojiro.

The interior of the prince's country residence was very beautiful. It was only one story high, but the rooms were immense, and the fusumas were of glass. From the zashiki, where he sat and ate alone, he looked through a dazzling vista. Room after room was revealed as if in mirrored depths, with splendid carvings in ivory, old bronzes and gold and lacquer. Here and there a rare old tapestry sparkled with golden embroidery, or a bronze monster loomed against a beautiful panel of lacquer, polished to reflect it a thousand times. The glass fusumas revealed it all in vivid lights, — a scene that beggared description, a magnificent display of wealth and artistic taste. Behind Kojiro the tokonoma, the alcove of honor, blazed with gold and was garlanded deep in flowers. Strangely too, though he noticed it not at all, the garlands were of lotus flowers, the flowers of the dead in Nippon.

Kojiro himself, having finished his meal, drank continuously and deeply of saké, and its fire was creeping through his veins. At a lower table Saigo and Inouyé had been fed, and both were flushed with drink. But Saigo, carefully instructed by the more astute Owannon, held to his purpose. He demanded the release of O Umè San in the name of the British Koshi Sama. Kojiro defied him.

"She came here of her own will," he sneered; "she is mine!"

Saigo prostrated himself. "Honorably deign to forgive!" He whined, "she is miserably foolish, she ran away to escape the barbarian. The Koshi Sama wills that she marry. If I leave her here, without your Augustness marry her, then I —" Saigo failed to describe what fate would befall him.

Inouyé, who had escaped from Overton's wrath with difficulty, was at last afraid. He was, after all, the humblest, and therefore the most likely victim. He went softly out and returned with the little geishas of the Garden of the Dragon. They all fell on their knees.

"Condescend to accept these three in Umè's place," he said.

Kojiro laughed. "She grows in value. At first six hundred ryō; now there is no money to buy her. Can these miserable girls dance?"

He leaned forward, his chin in his hand, tormentingly calm. He had Umè San safe in his possession; he was mocking the two Japanese.

Saigo stirred up the little geishas with his bamboo stick. The girls were frightened, but they rose obediently. Their gay kimonos were massed with flowers, their heads glittered with gold pins. One of them began to play the samisen; the tune was quick, keen, recurrent.

“ ‘Kompira funé — funé!’ ”

The other two began to race with the saké cup. Their bright sleeves fluttered, their painted faces smiled and laughed, but their hearts beat in their throats. Even the little geishas feared the man who sat and watched, his chin in the hollow of his hand.

Drops of perspiration stood out on Saigo's bald head. Inouyé squatted in the corner; he ached exceedingly from physical contact with Hallard and Maloney. But he remembered, with malicious joy, that he had betrayed nothing. They knew nothing of Kojiro's palace, nor of Umè's voluntary return. A return that deeply mystified Inouyé.

“ ‘Kompira funé — funé!’ ”

The samisen tinkled rapidly; the two girls, running in the figure eight, met, and poor little O Kane drank the saké.

While they danced, Yokogi ushered in Yoshida, the runner from the Embassy. He brought a

letter from Overton, and Saigo read it with a blanching face.

Overton, whose secret was no longer a secret, threatened dire things if Umè were not immediately married to Kojiro. As the Princess Kojiro, he might even admit the relationship; as Kojiro's slave, Umè would be his ruin. He swore to have Saigo hanged if Kojiro did not marry Umè San.

Saigo sank in a little heap on the mat, weeping. Why had the little fool given herself up to the prince? The way of the gods was strange, but the way of women was madness! He told Kojiro that the British Koshi Sama would have Umè if he came with an army from the Son of Heaven. Then Kojiro took the letter by force and read it. He had been drinking much saké and his blood was hot; he laughed and ordered him away.

"Wait without, dogs!" he said to them sharply. "Yokogi, bring hither O Umè San."

Then he dropped back again beside the saké and sat, chin in hand, his fierce eyes fixed, his face deeply flushed with liquor.

"'Kompira funé — funé!'"

The samisen tinkled now the other side of the glass fusuma, and the little geishas danced, their bright sleeves fluttering, trembling, swinging, as they moved. They looked like butterflies caught in a polished mirror.

Across the end of the long audience-chamber there was a beam about six feet above the floor and firmly set in sockets in the outer frame, which held the shoji. Across it was hung a curious rope of bamboo fiber. Kojiro looked at it long and intently, then he smiled, and his smile was diabolical. He was already nearly drunk, but his mind worked clearly; the saké only lubricated it, inspired it with further deviltry.

Yokogi in the garden called to Umè. She was still sitting beside O Takè crooning a lullaby to the baby.

Within the samisen tinkled mockingly.

“ ‘Kompira funé — funé!’ ”

Kojira laughed again.

XXII

YOKOGI, his dark, narrow face as inscrutable as a bronze god, softly opened the shoji for Umè San. She passed him with gentle dignity, her small head erect. O Takè had clothed her in a white kimono, and even her obi was of spotless brocade; she stood before Kojiro clad from head to foot in the snowy garments of Shinto mourning, only the graceful head, instead of being swathed in the white mourning veil, was uncovered and unadorned except with the smooth folds of her abundant hair. Her hands were tied behind her back; she came as a slave and a prisoner.

Kojiro, in his crouched attitude, his chin in the hollow of his hand, watched her. Even he felt a thrill of admiration at the sight of her fearlessness. Umè had the superb courage of conscious innocence and high purpose, of faith in the gods.

The prince spoke to Yokogi. "Loose her hands," he said briefly.

Yokogi obeyed like a machine; he seemed to feel neither compassion, nor interest, nor anger, but his narrow eyes were strangely intent.

"Go!" commanded Kojiro, "and presently bring hither Nishida."

Yokogi went and there was a deep silence.

Then tunelessly the samisen.

" 'Kompira funé — funé!' "

"So!" said Kojiro at last, "the bird has returned to its nest!"

Umè made no answer; she was silently praying to the gods. Her horror of the man grew as she realized him, and realized that she was in his power.

"After all," mocked Kojiro, "you could not stay away from me."

Then she looked at him, and there was loathing in her clear glance. "You mistake," she said, in a low steady voice, "I came here because I would save him. For me he was ruined. If I obey my august father and marry you, he is saved. For him I do it, Prince Kojiro."

Kojiro laughed bitterly. "You are simple, Ume-no-hana! Am I to marry you to save the young yellow-haired barbarian?"

She looked up, and her face was beautiful. "Very willingly I give my life, Prince Kojiro, to make him safe again."

"There are ways to slay barbarians, Umè," said the prince provokingly. "You love the barbarian, therefore I hate him; he will die."

She shuddered. "The gods will save him," she said devoutly; "the Christian's God will save him!"

"Then why give yourself to save him?" he mocked. "Let his god do it, Umè San!"

"I give myself because I was miserably the cause," she replied simply. "Because he loves me, he would give up all for me; if he sees me, he will do it! I go out of his life; therefore, I am lost to him. I am your wife, I live here within these walls. It is my august father's will; disobedience is a sin!"

Kojiro laughed again, more mockingly. "You are in my hand, Umè, like the uguisu in my garden, the cricket in its cage; why should I marry you at all, foolish one?"

She clasped her little hands tightly under her long white sleeves. "Kwannon will have mercy on me," she said, in a low voice. "I fear you not, Prince Kojiro."

Kojiro lifted the saké cup. "Come here," he commanded, "and drink this wine with me, Umè San."

Umè knelt where she stood, and as she knelt she slipped a cautious hand along the floor. The mats were divided, and her slender fingers reached down between them. "Forth comes not, Prince," she said meekly. "I drink no saké; it is my vow."

He set the cup down with a sudden fierce change of manner. "I commanded you here," he said harshly; "do you dare me to my face?"

Umè rose, wonderfully calm; she even smiled.

"Forgive, Augustness; I cannot."

Kojiro rose, and tossed the saké cup on the floor; it broke in a hundred pieces. "I will make you obey!" he said, between his teeth.

Umè held up a slender hand. "Augustness, I have slipped the bolt of the opening. I stand here beside it; if your Augustness comes but one step nearer, little Umè goes down, down into the pit."

"Lord of Hell, who told you of the trap?" he demanded fiercely.

She smiled. "Kwannon is merciful to the helpless ones, Lord."

"Kwannon? Some one told thee, Umè-ko, or thou art a little teasing devil!"

She said nothing; her slender white figure drooped. She had meant to sacrifice herself for Hallard, to bury herself as Kojiro's wife, but it was so much easier to die! "Kwannon, be merciful," she prayed; "is it not enough to die? Or must I do more, suffer more than death, to make my humble sacrifice complete? Oh, Kwannon, let me die!"

Kojiro, deeply flushed with wine, stared at her in fury; yet he knew he dared not risk the trap-door. He had seen her before quite ready to die, and a step on that unfastened door was death in the pit below. He had invented a way to rid him of his enemies in secret; it was now to be used as a potent means to save his innocent victim from him. He ground his teeth,

watching her. There was some invisible power in the girl, some spell of purity and truth that seemed to envelop her in light. She was so small, so slender; yet the power of her spirit had twice prevailed against him. It only increased his furious determination to break her to his will. He mocked her.

"I thought you came here to sacrifice yourself for the barbarian! Where is the august sacrifice? You are eagerly willing to jump into the pit, but you will not fulfil your pledge."

"I came to marry you," she said; "my father wills it. He never willed me to be your slave, Augustness. I am samurai."

Kojiro laughed. "So!" he said, "you are samurai. You shall presently see what I do to a samurai," and he touched a little bronze bell which was sweet as a bird note.

"What will you do, Umè San? Stand forever beside the pit? When you leave it, as the gods live, you are mine!"

Umè looked at him; it was bitterly hard to look at him, and she shrank involuntarily from his furious face. He had been drinking deeply, but of that he gave no sign. His face was pale, set, horrible; his eyes glittered. She drew a hard breath.

"I will never leave it, Prince," she replied, in an almost inaudible voice. "I will die."

He watched her narrowly; as yet he saw no

way to snatch her from the brink of self-inflicted death, but he meant to find a way. "I will marry you, Umè," he said at last. "I believe in your courage; you are indeed samurai in heart. I will marry you. But first, Umè San, see what I do to my enemies, and remember that the barbarian is my enemy."

As he spoke, Yokogi opened the glass fusuma, and through the space came Saigo and Inouyé, bowing low, and the little geishas, as well as Prince Kojiro's servants. Last of all they led in old Nishida, bound with cruel thongs. The samurai walked erect; he even smiled.

Kojiro had returned to his seat. He made a sign to Yokogi to seize Umè from behind and pinion her. The steward obeyed. Umè, taken unawares, struggled and then suffered him to draw her back. Kojiro made another sign, and Yokogi loosed her long enough to stoop and fasten the trap. Then Kojiro turned, with a slow wicked smile, to the old samurai.

"Nishida," he said, "do you still refuse to confess that O Takè is unfaithful?"

"I do, august Prince." Nishida's voice was horribly calm.

"Do you deny that she, your miserable daughter, being an adulteress, deserves to die?"

"I declare that my honorable daughter, O Takè, is your true and lawful wife, Prince Kojiro Hirata."

"I have divorced her."

"She is faithful," said Nishida. "I deny that you have the right to divorce her. I appeal to Tenshi Sama."

There was an awful pause.

To some here, even among Kojiro's retainers, the name of the Son of Heaven was sacred. Saigo prostrated himself; Inouyé slunk back into the corner. Umè San watched Nishida; the power of the old man's resistance found a response in her gentle bosom. She, too, would resist. The Son of Heaven was the father of her father and her mother!

Kojiro reached for his saké bottle, but his hand shook, and a little of the liquor was spilled upon the floor.

"Yokogi," he said, in his low fierce voice, "stretch him upon the cords."

Yokogi reached for the rope that was thrown over the beam. He bound Nishida's hands tightly behind his back and, throwing the free end over the beam, he fastened it to a cylindrical roller and turned the crank twice, three times, drawing the old man back and up by his bound hands. Nishida smiled.

Kojiro turned to another servant. "Rinzo, bring hither O Takè San."

Her father heard it; he still smiled but drops of sweat started on his forehead. Yokogi turned the crank. It creaked horribly. Umè shuddered.

"Nishida Enryō, is thy daughter faithless?"
Kojiro bent again in his old attitude, chin in hand.

"No!"

Yokogi turned the crank again; the agony must have been great, but the samurai smiled.

"Nishida Enryō, say that she is false and I will free you!" taunted Kojiro.

"She is true, demon of hell!" cried the old man, in agony.

Kojiro looked down the long room and saw Rinzo leading in O Takè and her baby. "Turn again, Yokogi!" he commanded, and laughed.

The cylinder revolved once more.

"Nishida Enryō, behold your daughter, who should have died by your hand. She is false."

But Nishida could not answer; he was unconscious. O Takè, seeing her father apparently dead, screamed aloud.

There was a movement among Kojiro's slaves, who lined the side of the room. But Yokogi, the steward, held up his hand, and immediately it ceased.

Kojiro looked from Umè's flowerlike face to poor O Takè's wasted cheeks and pinched mouth. He grinned diabolically.

"O Takè," he said, "the slaves who carry out the old man wait. Confess your sin, or suffer as he has."

Takè gathered her strength, for she, too, was samurai. "Lord, I am innocent!"

"Demons of the deepest hell!" cried Kojiro, "you lie! You loved Ogura Yasu; your soul told it to me. You lie, adulteress!"

O Takè looked at him; her soul rose in fury. "It is you who lie, Prince Kojiro!"

"Yokogi," said Kojiro furiously, "take that child from her; it is Ogura's brat! Cast it into the pit!"

"As the gods live, it is false!" said O Takè wildly, clinging to the child. "It is yours, Prince Kojiro; you would murder your own daughter!"

"Yokogi," said the prince, "cast the brat into the pit."

Yokogi turned and raised both hands high above his own head. O Takè screamed aloud in agony, and casting herself down, crouched over the child. Umè ran to her, bound as she was.

"Oh, Takè!" she sobbed.

Kojiro rose and shouted: "Obey me!"

Yokogi stood with both hands uplifted.

"It is the Way of the Gods!" he said suddenly, in a loud voice. It was a signal.

The servants of Kojiro flung themselves upon the brutal prince with a rush. They beat him down, their cruel Japanese swords flashing. There was one fearful cry; Kojiro fell heavily, rolled over on the floor, and lay still.

Umè stood in horror; his blood had crept to the edge of her white robe.

O Takè, holding her baby safe and close, seized the terrified girl, and pushed her through the open shoji.

"Fly!" she whispered, "in Kwannon's name, begone, O Umè! Those men, Saigo and Inouyé, still live. I will undo the gate; Yokogi gave me the little key but now. Fly!"

The garden was dark, cool, merciful. From the house came terrible cries, triumphant shouts. They had planned the tyrant's death well, now they made merry with his saké. Umè clung to Takè, weeping. The older woman pushed her with her one free hand. Already she heard feet on the gravel path.

"Fly, Umè!" she whispered, "while there is yet time."

Then they heard Saigo's voice calling to Inouyé.

"Where is she? Find her! Raise the alarm!"

The two women fled together blindly, stumbling over stones, plunging down the slope. O Takè guided. Behind them streamed the lights from the open shoji. Once they looked back and saw dark figures searching in the shrubbery. Then some one came out of the house bearing a red lantern on a pole.

O Takè tore at Umè's loosely tied bonds and freed her, hushing the baby's cries. The red lantern came on, winking like an evil eye.

The two women were at the little gate behind the hedge of orange-thorn. With shaking fingers,

Umè groped for the lock, while O Takè again hushed the baby, who had whimpered.

Inouyé heard the cry and called to Saigo: "They are in the garden; the baby cries!"

But just then the key turned in the lock and the gate opened. A dry hot wind blew in their faces, and they were blinded with dust. O Takè reached back, got the key, and closed the gate behind them. They stood shivering in the dark though it was very hot.

XXIII

WEARILY Umè San looked out of the car window as the train carried her on from Kyoto toward the wild mountains of Yoshino.

O Takè had hidden her, on the night of Kojiro's death, in the house of a poor seamstress, near the palace of the dead daimyō. In the morning old Nishida Enryō had found them and told of the scenes after Kojiro's murder and the arrival of the police, the flight of Yokogi, and the sudden disappearance of Saigo and Inouyé. Nishida believed that all would be well for him and for O Takè. He even hoped to get back some of his property, by appealing to the Emperor. But both he and O Takè feared for Umè. It was known, Nishida said, that the British Koshi Sama had paid for her disappearance. The temptation of money led to many evil things. Inouyé was eagerly seeking for the little geisha girl who belonged, so he said, to Owannon of the Garden of the Dragon. The claim was legal; Nishida advised Umè to hide herself, and he and O Takè raised a little money to pay her way to Yoshino.

For Umè, revealing nothing of her own heart, said only that she would return to her mother's little cottage in the forest, beyond Kami-ichi, on the banks of the Yoshino-gawa.

O Takè gave her another little gray kimono and a simple obi, and Umè set out alone. It was a long journey for her; she had traveled it once before with Masamitsu, and she knew the whole way, but her heart sank when she remembered how she had hoped much, chattering gayly with her brother, almost forgetting their grief at their mother's death, at the thought of the sea and the beach with its wonderful shells, and her unknown aunt, O Yoshi. She remembered it all, and tears filled her soft eyes, but her soul never faltered. Alone and helpless, she was yet strong in her spirit. She gathered her courage into both hands for the supreme sacrifice. There was a look on her face that made strangers turn to watch her. It was the beautiful, uplifted expression of one who has passed beyond earthly considerations, who sees, face to face, the things which are greater than life,—the way of the gods.

At Kyoto she posted a letter to Masamitsu. It might be long before it reached him, but he would receive it. In another incarnation they would see each other. She did not let her mind dwell upon him, in fear lest her courage fail her, for she had a very sweet and affectionate nature,

and loved very tenderly those whom she loved at all. Like all who love well, little Umè did not give her heart to many, only to the few who were her own.

She thought a little of the fields full of yellow lilies, where she and Masamitsu used to play while their mother, O Yone, still lived. She remembered her cooing voice when she spoke to her little ones, her "flower treasures," she called them. Those were happy days; Umè looked out at the swiftly passing landscape with tear-blinded eyes. They had been so happy; not even the unknown august father, who came not, had blighted the sweetness of that childhood. Then O Yone had died. Alone, poor, forsaken, she had died in the little cottage on the mountain, where Umè was going now to meet her own fate face to face. O Yone had called her two children to her and solemnly told them of her marriage to the barbarian; and Yumoto, the blind amma, had heard her and confirmed her words. With him O Yone left the children, bidding him take them to O Yoshi, her sister, at Horiuchi. Then she died and Umè recalled now the solemn sweetness of the scene. She had not feared death in this familiar shape; both she and Masamitsu had seen the blue flame hover over her dead mother's breast, as the spirit became a Buddha. After all, death was beautiful; how infinitely better than to be the slave of Kojiro!

Umè shuddered at the thought of the fate she had courted to save Hallard. She had been willing to make any sacrifice to expiate what she regarded as the sin of her intrusion into his life. That night at the Embassy she had been made to feel that she had ruined the man she loved so blindly, and her young soul had risen to the most supreme of all sacrifices to undo her error. She had been willing to give herself into slavery, to efface herself, that he might have again all that he had lost.

She was still determined to pass out of his life, to give her own as a vicarious sacrifice to propitiate the gods. She bent her beautiful head and hid her face in her soft gray sleeves. She was young, strong, full of life; the desire of life, the keen longing of a loving heart, and the determination to immolate herself for him contended together. She had long since ceased to weep, but there were hours of darkness when her young body cried out for the right to live, and her soul refused it.

It was a long, long journey to her. Sometimes she looked out at the lovely landscape, the keen-edged hills of Nippon, its deep valleys. She saw the white walls of the Castle of Takatori, and the curious chimneys of Sakurai. She was passing among the sacred provinces outside of Kyoto, the Saikoku Sanjū-san-Sho, the Thirty-Three Shrines sacred to the Goddess of Mercy.

Umè raised her eyes drearily, her lips murmuring unconsciously the hymn to Kwannon:

“‘ Iku tabi mo
Mairu kokoro wa
Hatsuse-dera
Yama mo chikai mo
Fukaki tani-gawa.’ ”

There were the beautiful mountains again, — the mountains that had seemed so high to her childish eyes; there were the deep valley and the limpid river, the Yoshino-gawa, where her childish feet had waded. She watched a white stork standing in the shallows as long as she could see him.

At Kami-ichi she left the train. She was very hungry and she ventured to stop at a little tea-house by the wayside and buy some food. Not much, for her purse was very slender and the proprietor stared hard at her; even the little musumë followed her to the gate to watch her up the road. Umè fled, panic-stricken; she had never been alone upon a journey. She was a half-caste and beautiful, and she did not dream how strangely she looked, her stately slender figure in the shabby gray kimono, her little feet in coarse straw sandals, and her flowerlike face with the wonderful look of one who communes with the gods.

Once she thought she saw Owannon in the crowd and she fled yet more wildly. There was

a journey, too, to be made by jinrikisha train, a long path up the mountainside, where, now and then, they passed a tiny brown house, a mere shell, with its bench and its blue bowls for the passing pilgrims. Higher and higher they climbed, until the white fingers of the mist reached down toward them, and mocked them with the hope of a moisture that was as elusive as they were, whirling upward to the peaks above. Then the jinrikishas went no further, and she had to continue on foot.

She was delicate, and the way was long and steep. It turned sharply above the banks of the river and ascended the mountain; in the distance she saw the sharp peak of Takami-tōge; around her were the yama-zakura, the mountain cherry trees. She climbed wearily; it was still and fragrant under the green boughs, and presently she entered a temple and prayed before the shrine of Kwannon.

She was now very weary, but she continued on into the woods; constantly the thought of Owannon's hideous face haunted her. At first she could not find her way. Then she saw a gray rock, or an old conifer that she remembered. Presently a little uguisu sang. It was her bird, and she stopped, leaning against a tree to listen. The moss was deep in pine needles under her feet; she saw the blue sky through black-green branches. It was still, sweet, peaceful, but so hot and dry.

She wanted water, but the little mountain stream scarcely trickled; here and there were only the parched beds of rivulets; the waterfall, that had sent a spray like a white plume over the rocks, was gone. The great drought had smitten the rice paddies below. Everywhere the fields were full of little wooden arrows, each carrying a prayer for rain.

Umè sank down once and rested, slow tears slipping down her cheeks; then she thought she heard some one following, creeping and rustling in the wood. Her heart beat in her throat, and a horror of Owannon, of Inouyé, seized upon her. Were they tracking her? Or Saigo the Wolf? She rose and fled under the big trees, hiding now and then to listen.

It was still; only the nightingale sang. She turned beside the dry bed of a stream and ascended. Twice she stopped to pray. Then she found the path again, passed through a thicket of azaleas, dead and dry for lack of rain, and came suddenly upon a little, brown, deserted hut.

She stood still and looked at it, her heart flooded with sad, delicious memories. It was her home. Small, brown, weather-worn, the shoji closed, the hana-shōbu growing on the roof, a gourd-vine clinging to the veranda, it still touched her to the soul. Childhood came back, the free, happy little heart, the ripple of Masamitsu's laughter,

her mother's voice. Umè knelt and clasped her hands against her breast.

"Honorable mother," she said softly, "I am come to be a Buddha also. I come to thee, thine own little child. I have loved; it is augustly painful but beautiful. I have only this, my life, unstained, to give to the gods. I have asked Kwan-non to mercifully condescend to accept it as a sacrifice, that it may be with him as if I had never been. To thee, honorable mother, I need not speak. Thou hast always loved thine unworthy child, I —"

Again she hid her face in her long gray sleeves. Her young, white soul was ready for its last supreme sacrifice, but the poor delicate body shrank and quivered, the childish heart was suddenly desolate.

Sweetly the little nightingale sang.

XXIV

MASAMITSU, seeking secretly, but diligently, for Umè, at last received her letter. Understanding at once the purpose that she sought to hide in her carefully worded phrases, his heart sank.

The way to Kami-ichi was long to him, and he had no money. Before he could obtain any, Umè must necessarily accomplish her design. He was sure that she meant to sacrifice herself for the foreign barbarian, and his heart was bitter against Hallard. Again the barbarian had smitten his family. His mother, unacknowledged and deserted, had died under a cloud of unmerited shame; he and Umè had borne the reproach of the half-caste; and now, for some unknown reason, his sister was about to sacrifice her young life to the gods for the new alien.

Masamitsu cursed fate and the barbarian; he hated the blood that flowed in his own veins and made him different from his fellows; he, who loved Dai Nippon passionately, was reproached. "Half-caste!" The boy shook his clenched fist at the heavens. He hated his own father. Yu-

moto, the blind amma, had told him the story, and Masamitsu, far from seeking recognition, cursed the British Koshi Sama. If he had ever liked Hallard, he forgot it; he regarded him as his sister's murderer. Blind with rage, he would have killed him, in boyish fury, if he had met him just after he read Umè's letter.

But the blind amma pleaded with the boy. He had been an ear-witness of the scene at the British Embassy; he understood vaguely, perhaps, yet in a way, Hallard's attitude. He believed that he loved Umè San after the fashion of the barbarians, which is to love a wife more than a parent. It was incomprehensible and even immoral to Yumoto, but he recognized the advantage of an appeal to Hallard. He and Umè cared for each other after the fashion of those indiscreet Japanese lovers, who, discovering in their own hearts the strange barbarian passion, die together the love-death, the *shinjū*. If money was to be obtained to reach Umè at Kami-ichi, it must be obtained from Hallard. The blind amma, with the pride of the samurai, scorned the Koshi Sama. He, who had bargained with the dead fiend, Kojiro, for the disappearance of his own child, was unworthy. Yumoto even distrusted Maud Overton. She had tried to get news of Umè and had been refused, evaded, misled. But the young barbarian who loved Umè San might do much, and the blind amma loved the gentle girl himself,

as one may love one's own child, without offense to the gods.

But Masamitsu refused to listen. He would never deal with the foreigner; he would serve the Emperor in the field, and there, perhaps, the accursed blood might run out of his veins in the service of Great Augustness. Like Umè, he would make a vicarious atonement, but he would make it grandly, in the field of battle, as became a man and a samurai. Yamato Damashii! He would die the Great Death!

The blind amma piped plaintively upon his reeds; it was evident in these days that the young would never listen to the ripe wisdom of age. The barbarians had already corrupted Nippon! It was not so in old time.

However, Masamitsu was forced to curb his fiery temper and lead the blind man. Even the most intense fire-eater must live; the boy was earning his bread in great bitterness of spirit. They were singular figures together. The blind amma patiently piped upon his reeds, his sightless eyes turned helplessly upon the ground, his hand on Masamitsu's wrist. The young man was tall and lithe; his straight limbs and wide chest suggested the Eurasian. He wore only a fundoshi of bleached muslin and a blue cotton juban, while his bare feet were thrust into straw sandals, but his athletic, beautiful form could bear the revelation. There was a certain conscious dignity about

him, a somber pride, that conveyed something of the tempest in his soul.

The strange pair walked along the banks of the Sumida-gawa, disputing about Umè-ko. The boy wanted to go to her and had no money, the blind amma wanted to obtain the money from Hallard; and all the while time passed. Masamitsu wrung his hands.

"She will depart to become a Buddha!" he said. "It is not time to save her!"

The blind amma sighed again. It was noon; Umè's letter had been received early in the morning. They had wasted four hours in quarreling; meanwhile she journeyed on to meet her fate.

It was intensely hot and dry; the banks of the Sumida-gawa were yellow with the falling leaves of the sakuras, which fluttered down, like driven yellow butterflies, upon the still surface of the river. The Mukojima was no longer arched with fairy blooms; above it the boughs were like dry skeletons, and they rattled weirdly when the dry wind rose. In the morning there had been a wind from the Yellow Sea; now it was parching, dusty, unbearable. The loaded barges traveled slowly on the river; the coolies sweated in the sun. In the far west Fuji raised its keen cone to a merciless sky. The bronze bells of the temples began to ring; Tokyo prayed for rain.

The blind amma held out his hand, feeling the atmosphere. "It is well if Umewaka wept," he

said. "Umewaka was buried yonder, Masamitsu, and when it rains they say the drops are the lost boy's tears."

"Umè-ko will also die!" said Masamitsu. "The gods curse the barbarians!"

Yumoto's hand tightened on his wrist. "My son," he said, "I hear a step approaching. I know the step; I, who cannot see, hear with the ears; keenly I hear."

Masamitsu shaded his eyes with his other hand. "As the gods live, it is he!"

The amma sucked in his breath, clenching his reeds. "Hallard Sama?"

"Aa! The barbarian for whom Umè suffers!"

Yumoto murmured to himself. Masamitsu thrust his hand into the fold of his dress; his fine eyes burned, he went white to his lips.

It was really Hallard. He and Pat had gone to Yokohama, but he had fretted at the appearance of flight, and would probably have returned at once but for his search for Umè. In that every maddened effort had been frustrated, and he had come back to Tokyo to find the blind amma. To his surprise he had received, before that, overtures from the Ambassador. Overton was too deep in debt to Hallard and his family to keep up his threatened severity; indeed he almost sued for mercy. He dreaded the Hallard influence at home.

Jack took no heed of the Ambassador's cow-

ardly advances; he did not even interest himself in the news he had received that the Foreign Office was contemplating Overton's downfall. He was given up, heart and soul, to the search for Umè. He had been frantic at the thought of her return to Kojiro. Maud had been able to throw some light on Umè's frame of mind, but neither of them could find a trace of her whereabouts.

Hallard was mad with anxiety, thwarted and misled. Then the news of Kojiro's violent death crept out. He went to the murdered daimyō's home, guided by the universal excitement of the assassination, but even there he found no trace of Umè. He did, in fact, talk face to face with old Nishida Enryō, but he learned nothing. The samurai kept Umè's secret zealously; through his ambition poor O Takè had suffered bitterly, and he was determined to protect Umè from the foreign barbarian. So Hallard went away without even divining that the old Japanese knew Umè San and had, indeed, furnished the money to send her far away.

In despair, at last Hallard came to Tokyo to try to find the blind amma. He had been searching diligently for forty-eight hours when he started out on the Mukojima, and there, in the long avenue of cherry trees, he heard the amma pipe again upon his reeds. In a moment the present was swept away; he stood again in the garden

of the Embassy and heard the shrill piping of Pan!

Then he came up swiftly. "Yumoto!" he cried eagerly.

There was a flash of steel and Masamitsu threw himself on Jack. Taken unawares, Hallard reeled slightly and felt the sting of the knife in the arm that he had raised to ward off the blow. The next instant he closed with the boy and succeeded in disarming him. In the struggle he recognized him.

"You're Umè's brother," he said, releasing him, and flinging the weapon into the river. "What is your quarrel with me, Masamitsu?"

The boy was breathing hard; great beads of perspiration beaded his forehead. "You are barbarian!" he said. "For you my sister dies!"

"Good God! What can you mean?" Hallard seized him by the arm and shook him.

Masamitsu stared at him with fierce eyes. "She is samurai. She dies to atone for coming to the house of the Koshi Sama and seeing you!"

Hallard turned to the amma. "For heaven's sake, Yumoto, tell me; let me understand. This boy is mad! Where's Umè San?"

"Gon up beyond Kami-ichi in Yoshino," replied the amma, "to her old home in the hills, to die there, to honorably make sacrifice to the gods, that in another birth all may be well."

Hallard groaned. "Old man, tell me how to

find it; I must see her! This is hideous! Umè, little Umè — oh, my God!”

His grief was so apparent that Masamitsu watched him strangely. His own people never showed grief like that.

“Masamitsu knows the way,” said the amma significantly. “I am blind.”

Hallard turned to Umè's brother. “Masamitsu,” he said earnestly, “I understand now your rage against me. I forgive you the stab —” he had bound his handkerchief around his arm; “if I had caused this I ought to be hung! But I love your sister; I intend, if I ever find her, to make her my wife, and to force your father to acknowledge you both. You are his son and his heir. Can you trust me; will you take me at once to Umè?”

Masamitsu deliberated, his darkened face inscrutable. Hallard, chafing under the delay, knew that he must win him.

“At least let Umè herself judge,” he pleaded; “she knows that I love her. Let us go before it is too late.”

The blind amma laid his hand on Masamitsu's arm. “Listen,” he said, in Japanese, “this man is of your father's people; he speaks honorably well. Go with him, Masamitsu; the gods will you to save Umè San. I command you, in your august mother's name; O Yone bids you go!”

Hallard understood that the amma was plead-

ing; he held out his hand. "Umè's brother is mine," he said, with an engaging frankness which seemed to reach through the Japanese boy's proud grief.

Masamitsu raised his eyes; they looked long at each other, then he held out his hand.

"To forgive honorably condescend," he said, pointing to the blood-stained sleeve.

Three hours later they were on their way together to Kyoto. To Hallard the journey seemed even longer than it had to Umè. His impatient spirit traveled ahead of the express. Masamitsu was shy and silent, and Jack's arm was more or less painful, in spite of the dressing at the hospital. The heat was intense, and everywhere the drought had burned deep into the landscape.

All the way he was torn with the thought that he would be too late. He saw her again and again, as she had looked that last night at the Embassy, her tender eyes following him with such unutterable grief, her unconscious revelation of her own simple heart, her trust in him, as absolute as it was touching. His heart was wrung with anxiety. God alone knew what she had endured before she set out to offer her life as a vicarious atonement for his disgrace that night. He groaned at the thought, conscious that Masamitsu wondered at him. For the boy, true to his Eastern training, made no sign.

In silence they changed carriages at Ōji and

again sped on into the mountains. The journey seemed to Hallard to grow longer instead of shorter; endlessly they traveled, and always Umè's flowerlike face seemed to smile at him, — that pathetic, tender little smile.

It was a day of greater heat, about sunset, when they left the jinrikisha train, having changed at Kami-ichi, and set out on foot to find the little hut in the mountains. The climb was steep and tiresome; the hot wind blew the dust in their faces, the land was parched for water, the sa-sa grass was shriveled on the slopes.

Without a word, Hallard followed Masamitsu, wondering if Umè's poor, tired little feet had really climbed this weary path. They left the last village behind them; they passed the temple, and were up now among the great conifers. There was fragrance in the woods; the dark trees locked overhead, and through the weird branches he saw the sky as Umè had seen it. To-day it was like an orange in color and misted with heat.

It was very still; now and then a loose stone started under their feet and bounded down. Then, suddenly, there was the deep roll of drums, a sound that seemed to fill their ears and echo back from mountain to mountain.

Hallard stopped and listened.

"The priests pray for rain," said Masamitsu briefly.

They went on.

At last a light gleamed through the trees, pure and white as a star. Jack's heart leaped. They broke through the dry thicket. A nightingale started up and sang.

Before them was the little cottage; the shoji were all open, a coal still burned in the hibachi, there was an offering before the little ihai, on the "Shelf of the August Spirits," and Umè's lantern, the lotus lantern she had carried to the Bon, was hung there lighted; it had guided them, a white star.

She had been there; her presence seemed to pervade the place, but it was empty. They called her, but only the echoes answered. Masamitsu went to the side of the little room and pointed. Two scabbards hung there; one held the long sword of the samurai, the short one was empty. Their mother had kept the two swords sacredly hidden away because they belonged to their grandfather; he had died without giving up his swords.

"She has gone into the woods," Masamitsu said simply.

Hallard was frantic; the boy's stoicism was like a blow. "We must find her!" he cried.

Masamitsu scarcely seemed to hear him; he had found a long sheet of paper covered with the graceful Japanese writing of his sister. He read it, then he translated it aloud to the barbarian. It was the letter of Umè to her soul.

"Thou, O my Soul, give me strength, augustly condescend to help the weak body! The flesh miserably fears the sharp sword! Thou, O my Soul, condescend to help, permit this my body to atone. Greatly I loved him, let my poor death make him augustly happy, restore that which I vainly took away. Thou, O my Soul, make my poor flesh bear the sharp pain.

"The miserable body of Umè to her Soul."

Hallard broke down. "For God's sake, Masamitsu, where is she?"

The boy shook his head, pointing into the darkening forest.

Then, as if with a common impulse, they shouted. There was no answer, and they listened with beating hearts.

It was profoundly still; the dark trees stood motionless, the stifling heat smote upon their faces. Night marched with shadows through the pass below them; above, the keen mountain peak touched the orange light.

They heard the great drums beating for rain.

XXV

MR. MALONEY, left abruptly alone in Tokyo, felt the keenest anxiety for Hallard. His attachment was sincere, and the whole situation had been a shock to his sensibilities. He could not help feeling a reluctant admiration for Umè San, but he highly disapproved of the whole affair. He groaned in spirit over the uncomfortable turn it had taken, and he looked upon Hallard's sudden journey to Yoshino as another violent eccentricity. Moreover, he regarded the rural districts as places infested with squint-eyed brigands and fleas. Hallard had not explained the nature of his journey, but Pat surmised that it was connected with Umè San, and he endured the suspense only a few hours.

Before night he started out with the determination of braving Blake's wrath and getting into the compound. He must see either De Freece or Miss Overton. He did not fear discovery by the Ambassador; in fact, he had seen him start that morning for Yokohama, but he knew that Blake would remember the beer that had led to his undoing, and Hallard's escape. But Pat had

the courage of despair and he started for the Kōji-machi quarter with a determined brow.

Fortune favored him; on the Kudan Hill he met Thompson Dean. Dean had come up from Yokohama to see De Freece about the Overton troubles. Overton had received his recall under the stress of circumstances that looked like ruin. All the younger men at the Embassy, including Hallard, felt keenly for Maud. Arthur de Freece loved her; he was anxious to avert the impending catastrophe, and he had sent for Dean. The Reverend Thompson, coming up from the Shim-bashi station, almost ran into the eager arms of Mr. Maloney.

"Yer rivirince," said Pat, "be I lookin' loike meself? I fale quare in me hat!"

"I don't notice anything unusual, Maloney," replied Dean, smiling. "A little wildness in the eye, perhaps, but the color of your hair hasn't faded a jot."

Pat rubbed it fondly. "Begorra, sorr, it's a wonder! If it hadn't bin standin' up straight with fright it would have all fallen out in this haythen clime. Yer rivirince, Misther Hallard has gone clane off this mornin' with the yellow haythen that is th' brother of the young liddy, Miss Umè San, an' I'm that worrited aboot him that I can't ate or yit slape whin it's toime."

Dean thought a moment. "Maloney, has he had any real news of Miss Umè?"

"I can't say fer sartain, sorr, but th' blind ammy moight tell if he wahnted ter. I caught something about the wilds av Yoshinny and the sword av the samurruy."

Dean's anxiety awoke keenly. "Where's the amma? This must be looked into, Maloney; your master isn't altogether himself; we mustn't let him throw himself away."

"Yir rivirince," said Pat solemnly, "I wish the divil would fly away with all haythens, an' take their fleas an' moskeeties along with 'em."

"Like Pharaoh, Pat, you harden your heart," said Dean, with his whimsical smile; "come, let us find the blind amma."

After a long search they found him in Shiba Park, sitting at the gate of the Two Dêva Kings, the Ni-ten Mon, of the Temple. The amma's attitude was one of deep dejection; his reeds lay beside him on the grass, his head was bowed. The little boy who had been leading him was lying on his back in the sun, asleep.

Yumoto at first declined to answer any questions about Hallard, but after awhile Dean gained his confidence, and the blind man told the pathetic story of little Umè, and her determination to offer her life as an atonement to the gods, because she had brought misfortune to Hallard. He added that Masamitsu had gone with the latter, and Dean drew from him the reluctant story of Masamitsu's blind rage and the stab,

that had so perplexed and worried Maloney. Dean was now thoroughly alarmed. He knew that Hallard was deeply in love with Umè San, and he was horrified at the risk he ran on such an errand in the company of her brother, who might imagine him to be to blame for the catastrophe, and either murder him, or cause him to be murdered, in some wild spot where help was impossible, and discovery improbable. He determined at once to take the anxious Pat and the blind amma as a guide, and set out after his friend. Yumoto could, at least, tell them the way, if he could not see it. Dean's love for Jack was deep rooted in a boyish friendship, and he would not give him up to an unknown fate.

Having made his arrangements with Maloney and Yumoto, who were both eager — for very different reasons — to go, he hurried to the Embassy to see De Freece and Miss Overton. The intense heat and drought prevailed in Tokyo, as well as upon the hills, and only the splendor of Fuji seemed to lift the earth from the fever of the great dryness, and to clothe the scene with something of spiritual beauty still. A few white clouds floated like aerial tendrils about its crest, but the upper sky was like copper.

The second boy, who was door-keeper at Number One, was asleep upon his bench, and Dean had to stir him up with his stick before he could

obtain admission. He was shown into the drawing-room to wait for Miss Overton, and walked about nervously, scarcely noticing some of the rarer bits of tapestry and carving that she had collected to add to the decoration of the Embassy. The rooms were all deeply shaded, the bamboo screens hanging before every window, and the hot still atmosphere was full of their grassy odor. Dean noticed the little details, as we will, in a half conscious way, under the stress of strong emotion. It seemed to him every hour counted and he chafed at delay.

Then he heard Maud call to him. He found her in the dining-room, making iced tea for Arthur de Freece, with the smiling assistance of Unke. She wore a filmy white gown, open at the throat and sleeves, and had never looked more simple or engaging. Her blue eyes shone with a soft light, and she handed De Freece his cup of tea with that indefinable little air a woman has when she knows she is loved. The tall, stiff lieutenant had unbent; they had both forgotten Overton, and they were quite happy.

It gave Dean a shock. It was evident that his anxiety for Hallard had no echo here. It made him angry, and he blurted out his news: Umè's escape from Kojiro, her flight to the hills, her determination to kill herself, and Hallard's pursuit, in the company of Masamitsu, who had already stabbed him once.

Maud rose from the little tea-table white as a sheet. "How much time have you, Mr. Dean?" she breathed quickly.

He looked at his watch. "An hour."

"I'll be ready," Maud panted a little. "You'll take me with you!"

De Freece protested. "I'll go," he said, "but you — no, no!"

"There's no reason in the world, Miss Overton!" Dean was now conscience-stricken; he had overshot the mark. "I'd be glad to have Arthur, for we may need official backing, but you — why, I believe it's a wild place. We men can take care of Jack all right."

"I wasn't thinking of Jack," she replied quietly, her blue eyes flashing a message to De Freece; "I was thinking of — of my step-sister."

Both men saw her point at once. Yet they dreaded the journey with a young woman; there might be great difficulties. Maud read their thoughts.

"Little Maru, my Japanese maid, will go with me," she said simply. "She can make them understand, and she isn't blind, like your amma! You two silly boys are setting out with a blind man for a guide! Here, drink your tea; I've got only an hour to change my gown and pack my suitcase!"

De Freece followed her to the door. "Maud," he said, in a low voice, "I don't like it; you'll

have to face — God knows what! Dear girl, let us do it."

She looked up sweetly. "Arthur, it's the first thing I've asked of you. She's — she's my poor little sister!"

He pressed her hand without another word. She ran up-stairs and he turned to Dean.

"Hallard wired me from Yokohama that he'd canceled Overton's notes to him," he said, with an effort. "I've paid, as you know, two or three of the smaller debts here. I hope, Dean, we'll pull the Ambassador through without open scandal. Miss Overton —"

"Shall be shielded, if we can," said Dean warmly. "God bless her; she's very sweet and good in this crisis."

De Freece smiled, his face clearing. "She's promised to be my wife."

Dean held out his hand. "I congratulate you, and —" he added gently, "I congratulate her. She's found a man who can appreciate her goodness and shield her from her own father. Take her out of his reach, De Freece; he'll break her heart if he keeps on."

"He won't," replied Arthur; "he's broken down. He wants to go home and retire from public life, to keep out of a public scandal. He wrote and gave me his affidavit, acknowledging his marriage with Umè's mother, O Yone, the daughter of the samurai, Sakura Otoro,

and he admits that Masamitsu is his only son."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Dean devoutly. "This will be good news for Hallard, if we only find them all!"

They sat down and tried to drink iced tea and control their impatience. Dean went through some papers with De Freece and they disposed, between them, of another of Overton's smaller liabilities. Then they heard Maud's step on the stair. It seemed incredible, but she wore her traveling gown and O Maru hovered in the distance.

"Come," said Maud bravely, "we — we haven't a minute to lose; I've been half an hour, and it's eighteen minutes to Shimbashi from here!"

So it was that they set out only five hours after Hallard.

XXVI

TO the day of his death Hallard will always hear the drums beating for rain. Their dull boom reached up from the temple, far below, to unseen heights. The sound filled the forest; then it died completely. The light faded, the orange sky grew deeply red.

Masamitsu lit his little lantern. "We will seek her toward the gorge," he said. "The yellow lilies used to bloom there; she may be there."

Hallard hesitated, then he took down Umè's lotus lantern. "Masamitsu," he said, trying to control his intense emotion; "she will recognize this light. I'll carry it up yonder, higher on the hillside. If we separate, one of us may find her before it is too late. Shout three times if you are fortunate. I will do the same, if I find her. We'll return and meet here in any case."

"You do not know the woods," objected Masamitsu, lifting his lantern.

"I'll find the way. Good heavens, Masamitsu, it's no time to think of anything but Umè!"

As he spoke, Hallard plunged into the underbrush and struck out alone along the rocky spur

of the hill. The trees darkened overhead, but there were still long shafts of murky light through the forest. The effect was weird. He was walking through a wood of cryptomerias and chamaecypariss trees; the parched moss crumbled like powder beneath his feet, the heat choked him. He dreaded to look ahead, and his heart beat fast at every step. He held her lantern, its white light casting a ring before him on the almost imperceptible path. He hoped and prayed that she would see it, that he was not too late!

Horrible thought; it haunted him! Would he find her small delicate form lying prone on the ground, with the cruel steel in her loving heart? Or would he be in time?

He pressed on; twice he called her and the echo caught his voice and mocked him with her name. "Umè — Umè!"

Twilight was upon him; he was using her lantern now to pick his way up the steep ascent. Now and then a stone rolled under his foot and went bounding down, waking an echo at every leap. Now he followed the dry bed of a stream, and once or twice he started some small timid wild creature from the dry bracken.

He stopped and peered into the darkening forest; night marched in blackness, it gained on him. Hope died in his heart; if he found her he would be too late. Yet he courted certainty, he could endure suspense no longer. Better to find her

dead than to think of her as overtaken by some horrible fate. Her love for him, frank and innocent as a child's, touched his heart with infinite pathos. She had come to him, her only friend, in her hour of need, and it seemed that he had failed her! And she had been willing to give her young life in vicarious atonement, to restore to him the place that she believed she had taken from him.

She had offered her life in slavery to Kojiro, to obey her unnatural father, and to expiate his anger against the man she loved. The little daughter of the samurai was ready to die. Her courage, her absolute devotion, her simple faith in the expiation, were exquisitely touching, but the thought maddened Hallard.

He emerged now from the thick wood into a clearing; the failing light still lingered on a huge rock that rose in the center. Around him the trees girded the space. A path, broken at the edge of the rock, led him on; he was high up now above the little cottage. He stopped and listened, hoping to hear Masamitsu's shout. Instead he heard a soft sound, gentle, appealing. Surely, a human voice! He stood still, turned to stone, his heart in his throat. Did some wood nymph of Nippon mock him? Or was it a voice? At first a soft, unintelligible murmur, then words.

She was praying.

"Umè!" he cried involuntarily.

The sound ceased abruptly. He raised the

lotus lantern and sent its rays ahead of him. He was mad with suspense. Had he fancied it, was he mad?

"Umè!"

"Yes, Lord!"

Her voice thrilled with indescribable sweetness. There was joy, peace, wonder in it. She thought his soul spoke to hers.

"Where are you?" he cried.

"Here, O Lord Soul!" she answered softly, "here my poor body yet lives. But now — Kwan-non have mercy! It is thou!"

He had found her.

She was kneeling beside a tiny shrine set in the mouth of a cave under the great rock. An andon on the floor of the cave furnished a feeble light. Her delicate gray-clad figure was dimly outlined against the gray rock. Her face had the exquisite uplift of one who passes beyond mortal things. Her sash was tied tightly about her knees, after the fashion of samurai women who are about to die; the short cruel sword lay at her feet.

Hallard held her close. "Child, child!" he cried, "how could you? How dared you? I have searched for days for you!"

"For me?" She clung to him, trembling. "You love me still — lig — lig you did before?"

"More, Umè, more!"

She smiled divinely. "Now you make it hard, ver' hard to honorably become a Buddha!" she



“Child, child !” he cried, “how could you ?
How dared you ?” *Page 296.*

murmured, hiding her face against his shoulder.

"Oh, Jash, Jash, I so glad — so augustly glad to see you!"

"Glad to see me? And you came out here — my God, Umè, you didn't mean?" His face was ghastly; he had seen that naked nine-inch blade.

She followed his eyes and shuddered up against him. "Yes," she said, very low, "I come here, I pray to atone for — for whad I did! I pray and then — then —"

"Then what? Oh, Umè, what then?"

She looked up tearfully. "I thing — you not lig me! I wonder — if barbarians' God would lig whad I do? I was afraid — I lofe you, your God is my God! I pray — here in the cave to your God, Jash, and — and you call my name!"

Hallard bowed his head, touched to the soul. "My God answered you, Umè," he said hoarsely. "I also prayed in that extremity, but I'm a sinner!"

"Then I also a sinner," she said solemnly, "for I am lig whad you are, Jash!"

"God forbid!" he said, with sudden humility. "Umè, if you loved me, how could you torture me with all this anxiety? How could you leave me?"

She sighed. "You — you forgiv' me?"

"I believe I'd forgive you anything!"

"You forgiv' me! Jash, I — I know I hurt you, I miserably hurt you by going to Kōji-machi-Gobanchō. All night I thought of you

— with your hands tied!” She crossed hers. “I weep!”

“It was only the Old Man’s spite, Umè; it blew over like a cloud, and then came my agony about you. What did I care for anything when I thought you were in Kojiro’s power?”

She shuddered, closing her eyes as if to shut out some horrible sight. “I was there,” she said, “and I was saved. I thought —” she hung her head.

He tried to comfort her, as she sobbed again in his arms. “Umè, you’re safe now; I’ll never let you go again!”

She looked up; the light of the lotus lantern fell full on her face, on her beautiful eyes swimming in tears. “I thought I could marry Kojiro,” she murmured. “I thought I giv’ my life so for you, Superiority. But —” her voice trailed, her eyes sank under his — “but when I — I got there to the palace — then I know — lofe is not lig thad, Jash. I — I could die, I could not belong to Kojiro, no, nor to any one — else — in the world!”

“Because —” he tried to see her face now, but she hid it — “because you really loved me at last, Umè?”

“Becauss’ I alway lofe you, Superiority!”

He was seized with a humble recognition of her spirit.

“I thank God for such a heart as yours, Umè.

I'll — I'll try to be worthy of it! You know how much I love you?"

She smiled; her face shone with sudden perfect happiness. "I know! You love me — lig you did before, eh?"

"As I always will!"

Her mood changed, and she looked at him searchingly. "I do not desire to hurt you. Condescend to tell me, Lord, will he — my august father — be forever angry?"

"No, Umè, no! And if he were, what of it? You and I can brave his anger."

She shook her head. "It is wrong to disobey. I — I —" she glanced shudderingly at the sword — "Oh, Jash, I — I can't!" she sobbed. "I can't any more — love is not lig thad — If — I can't leave you!"

"You never shall!" He took the sword. "Umè, here goes the heathen idea! You are going to be a Christian and my wife. Christians don't believe in suicide. There goes your sword!" and he pitched it into the night.

As he did it, the earth rocked beneath their feet, there was a horrible sound in the distance, rain began to fall in torrents. He drew Umè back into the shelter of the cave. She clung to him.

"The gods are angry!" she whispered. "You threw away the sword of my honorable ancestors — the samurai sword!"

The wind leaped past the mouth of the cave like an armed giant. Their lights went out; it was black.

"Good heavens!" Hallard exclaimed, "and they were beating the drums for rain!"

Umè shivered in his arms. "The typhoon!" she whispered.

"We are safe here!" He thought with a pang of Masamitsu. "This cave is solid rock, isn't it, Umè?"

She listened; the wind howled mockingly, the rain fell in sheets, its spray stung their faces under the rock ledge.

"If the torrent come," she said, and he could scarcely hear her voice above the wind, "and the falls overflow ad the dry bed of the stream —" she caught her breath — "then — the cave will fill from the back, Jash!"

"And we'll be drowned out like rats!" He held her firmly, but his own heart sank. "Umè, we'll weather it; we haven't found each other to suffer demolition. God has heard your innocent prayers. You're not afraid?"

"Not — not ver'," she drew her breath, "not with you, Augustness!"

The wind leaped and howled on the mountain-side, the earth rocked under their feet. They could no longer hear each other speak. Umè clung to him in silence; once he felt her tremble, but she showed the courage of her samurai blood.

The storm increased in fury, and they could hear the wind scream like some furious monster seeking its prey. Great trees snapped like saplings; the blackness made their eyes ache.

Then, above other sounds, they distinguished the roar of water; the torrent was upon them, the dead dry bed of the stream was filled again, the foam made a visible whiteness in the night.

Again he felt Umè tremble as her hands tightened on his. Then the water touched their feet.

XXVII

MORNING dawned, weird as a ghost. Stripped trees leaned toppling against their fellows, giant pines were down. Where yesterday the beds of streams had been dry, to-day they were flushed with a yellow frothing torrent. The roar of many waters made a monotone. Overhead the angry clouds scudded like a host of lost spirits, driven before Michael and his angels. The crest of Ōmine was veiled in their shadowy wings, and shadows, deep, terrifying, wavering, darkened the forests; the gods of the mountains had been angry and hurled their wrath down upon mortals.

So dark was it under the giant trees that Masamitsu's red lantern was lifted to the top of a bamboo pole and danced up and down before them like an evil eye, as Dean and Pat Maloney climbed the foot-hills. Behind them came Maud Overton and the blind amma, helped and guided by De Freece.

At daybreak, when the storm had retreated suddenly, shrieking through the mountains like a wild beast, the little party of English people

set out, very anxious about Hallard. It was known in the village that a foreign barbarian was in the hills with a young native, and the blind amma soon learned that it was Masamitsu, still with Hallard. They all feared the worst. The storm had broken just after their arrival, and they had spent a miserable night in the village. In the morning O Maru, Maud's little Japanese maid, was left in charge of their abbreviated luggage, and the rest of them set out at once. Maud would not be left behind, and being strong and active, she impeded their progress very little, and she led the blind amma, who would not leave them. It was she who first saw Masamitsu, a drenched and sorry figure, bargaining for a new lantern at a little booth outside the nearest hamlet.

He had been out all night in the storm; he believed that his sister was dead, and that Hallard was lost. The blind amma talked with him and prevailed upon him to guide them. Pat Maloney refused to accept his statements and was firm in his conviction that "the haythen" had committed murder. He had to be restrained by both De Freece and Dean, otherwise Masamitsu would have received the drubbing of his life. Finally, however, Pat consented to suspend punishment until his guilt was publicly fixed, but he refused to let the young fellow out of his reach, and followed in Masamitsu's tracks with deadly determination.

Dean found it difficult to keep pace with them, for the paths were wiped out and the drenched underbrush had to be cut away in places before they could go on.

"The bloody haythen!" said Mr. Maloney fiercely, "look at the knife av him! He's murdered Misther Hallard and made oak-y-washy out av him! The bloody haythen, I'll lay his head open!

"Hold on, Pat!" Dean advised gently. "Let us have proof."

"Divil a bit!" replied Pat bluntly. "I know a hape more av these haythens than yer rivirince; savin' yer prisince, sorr, they're the divil's own!"

Dean sighed. In his heart he was desperately worried over Hallard. Alone in the forest in the fearful tempest, his chances seemed small enough, without adding the element of human treachery. There were ravines and keen precipices, and Masamitsu said that there were also wild boars. The hideous darkness grew upon them as they slowly proceeded; the clouds hung low, and the drenched foliage made an impenetrable screen over their heads. Masamitsu's graceful, almost naked figure was outlined against the crimson glow of his lantern. He walked ahead of them, unconscious of the horror of their doubts, with the free and certain tread of the born woodsman. In his hand he carried the long sword from the hut, and now and then it whirled in the air, a

ribbon of steel, and fell to hack away a trailing vine that roped off their path.

He did not take them to the cottage, but penetrated deep into the forest. Unable to wade the swollen stream, he had to avoid it. Every rustic bridge was down, and once they had to make a wide detour.

All day they searched, stopping only for a little food and drink to stay their stomachs. They had brought some scant provisions and ate them standing. Maud was pale with fatigue, but she would not give up. Terror grew in all their hearts, and they dared not hope.

Overhead the clouds still scudded low; twilight was coming in the sky, in the woods it was almost night. Masamitsu fed his lantern. They went on endlessly.

Then, quite suddenly, the blind amma stood still and piped upon his reeds. They stopped, breathless, looking at him.

"Mad as a hatter!" said Mr. Maloney sadly. "Jist kape yer eye on 'im!"

Still the amma piped, shrill as the piping of Pan.

Then, again, there was silence; he held up his hand. "I hear a voice!"

They listened. At first only the trees whispered and the torrent spoke. Then they all heard a shout.

"It's Hallard!" Dean sprang forward, trying to break through the brush.

"Wait!" said Masamitsu, and his sword whirled and tore its way through the tendrils.

De Freece hallooed. The hills re-echoed it and then, once more, they heard Hallard's voice.

"Oh, thank God!" said Maud.

"Where are you?" Dean shouted.

The hail was answered to the left. Masamitsu bent his ear low, straightened himself, and was off like an arrow, his red lantern dancing.

"The haythen varmint!" cried Mr. Maloney. "He knows!"

They followed, the bracken giving way with a crash before their sturdy efforts. Masamitsu's lantern went before like a red moon; it outlined towering trunks and encompassing branches.

They came out beside a cataract, for the cave was filled to its mouth. On top of the cliff Hallard sat with Umè. She was very pale, but her face was luminous, beautiful, uplifted.

Hallard leaped down and lifted her in his arms. They were both drenched and half starved. They had tried to find a way out of the forest and lost it, and had returned.

Dean threw his arms impulsively around Jack. Umè had gone to Maud. The others pressed around them.

"We're nearly all in," said Hallard, with a wan smile. "We couldn't find our way around this torrent. Umè wouldn't let me carry her all the way, and she couldn't climb. She begged to

wait; she seemed to feel that some one was coming!"

"Thank God, we came!" said Dean.

Pat offered Masamitsu his hand. "Misther Massymitsoo, I beg yer pahrdon, sorr! You ain't as black as I painted ye."

Umè looked up at Maud. "You are good, O Kiku!" she said sweetly, "I—I lofe you too!"

Maud smiled through her tears as Hallard took her hand.

"You're a trump, Maud!" he said hoarsely.

"Arthur," Maud's voice faltered, then she went on: "the paper!"

De Freece handed the Overton affidavit to Hallard. He read it to Umè and Masamitsu. The young man accepted it in proud silence, but he took Maud's hand. The blind amma bent his head; his lips moved, and he seemed to pray.

Umè smiled. "My honorable father, he is not angry with me any more, Jash. I—I hav' not hurt you then lig I thought, eh?"

Hallard took her hand in his. "Dean," he said gravely, "we have been face to face with death, and we love each other. Will you marry us now?"

There was a moment of eloquent silence. Mr. Maloney rubbed his eyes, the blind amma laid his hand fondly on Masamitsu's arm.

Dean drew his prayer-book from his pocket. Masamitsu raised the round red lantern. The great pines whispered overhead. The little group

stood reverently attentive. Dean's clear voice slightly faltered and then gained in tone and feeling. There, in the wind-swept solitude, he read the solemn office of the Church.

Hallard and Umè knelt to receive the benediction. Her hand trembled slightly in his, but she still wore the uplifted look of one who had seen immortal things face to face. As they rose, the others gathered around them, with both smiles and tears.

Umè looked up, and her lovely face colored softly, as she pointed heavenward. "Look," she whispered, "Jash, Jash! The stars shine. Superiority, little Umè brings you lamentably nothing! But her lofe will shine for you alway, even through the cloud, lig thad star!"

Abruptly, but sweetly, the blind amma piped upon his reeds.

THE END.



